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WHY JESUS DIED

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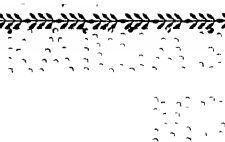
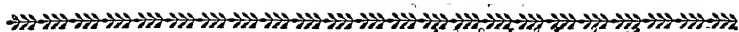
... THAT DAY ALONE

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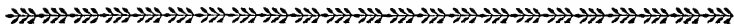
THE FORGOTTEN ALLY

EARTH COULD BE FAIR

THE TOWER OF TERZEL



WHY JESUS DIED



BY PIERRE VAN PAASSEN

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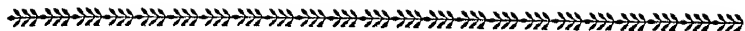
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PART 1

WHY JESUS DIED

IN THE BEGINNING

It was a custom in my father's house, as it was in most Dutch Calvinist homes of the old style, to read a portion from the Word of God after the principal meal. While the children were young, Father did the reading himself. But when we grew older and were deemed, by trial and error, to have acquired the proper intonation and dignity for what was known as "the right handling" of Holy Writ, the reading of the lesson for the day, as well as a brief comment on the sacred text, was not infrequently entrusted to one of the boys. The girls did not come into consideration. They were expected to listen in silence and bow their heads devoutly when, at the end of the reading, the men rose to thank God with filial gratitude for having given us, the spiritual descendants of Israel, the blessed light of His unfailing Word.

In this way we went through the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation once every three years, and then started anew. Of course, some frank Oriental passages, dealing with what might perhaps be called the rather un-Calvinistic deportment of certain patriarchs and other more

or less holy men and women, were decently skipped at the dinner table; or, at least, they were not dwelt upon with too minute a scrutiny if we ran into them inadvertently—which happened sometimes when Father, busy man that he was, neglected to explore the pages ahead before handing the sacred tome to one of his deputies.

For the rest, every incident mentioned in the Book, no matter how far beyond the bounds of reason, or running counter to the laws of nature, was accepted as positive truth and of historical authenticity. For us there was no difficulty in believing that God fashioned Eve from one of Adam's ribs, or that Elijah was swept into the clouds on a heavenly chariot, or that Lazarus of Bethany was raised from the dead. Miracles like that were expected to happen in the Bible. Where else? They caused us no surprise whatever.

Every chapter and verse, every word and syllable, to the last comma and semi-colon in the Holy Book, was held to be divinely inspired. This meant, we were told, that God Himself had held their pens for the sacred authors, and had guided their hands, or that the Holy Spirit, acting as a divine prompter, had suggested or whispered to them what to put down.

This extraordinary state of affairs applied not only to the original languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Divine inspiration had also directed and regulated the work of the scholars who, at the behest of their Serene Highnesses of the States-General in the years 1618–1619, translated the Scriptures into the Nether-German, or Dutch vernacular. Proof of God's concern for the correct rendering of the ancient verities into our mother tongue lay in the fact that whereas thousands died of the plague which raged in Holland in 1618, the burghers of Dordt, where the Synod met and the translators labored, passed through

the epidemic unscathed. "The noisome pestilence" of the ninety-first Psalm, "which walketh in darkness" did not "come nigh unto" those Dutch Reformed philologists. How could we doubt the authenticity of God's Word under these circumstances?

It is not too much to say that the Bible was our all in all. Without that Book, life would hardly have been worth living in a small old-fashioned community in the Netherlands. The Bible and commentary on the biblical text, in homilies from half a dozen pulpits three times every Sunday, in weekly catechism classes, daily at home and in the schoolroom, took the place of the theater, concerts, literature and art and other "vain diversions" of the human spirit, in vogue in other more "worldly" countries and communities.

Men talked for weeks on end about a sermon they had heard. In our home, and in the homes of relatives and friends, conversations and discussions, sometimes heatedly and with fierce polemical fervor, often went on far into the night on such topics as predestination, justification by faith, sanctification and the redemptive qualities of Jesus' blood. Merchants, costermongers, learned divines, bricklayers, hucksters and the most notable burghers of the town took part in that perpetual debate, and all were in dead earnest. Certain enlightened women, too, "mothers in Israel" they were called, occasionally took a hand in the controversies, although their opinions, it must be said, were held of little account by those of the elders and ministers who quoted from the misogynist St. Paul about "silly little women," "creeping into houses"—"forever teaching but never able to come to the knowledge of truth." That was as good an argument as any against female pretensions in the sacred and ecclesiastical sphere.

We pitied the handful of modernists and Unitarians and

suchlike "benighted heathen," whose scholars at the great universities of Leyden, Utrecht and Amsterdam had dared to lay hands on "our" Bible, for the purpose, as we were given to understand, of tearing it to pieces and destroying the hope of the world. Citizens who went to listen to sermons preached by modernists and Unitarians were those unfortunate "blind led by the blind," who are mentioned in the New Testament as being of a certainty headed for the pit.

That these savants might be earnestly searching for the truth in attempting to separate the dross from the gold, myths from facts, hoary tribal legends from actual happenings, allegories, symbols and dogmas from objective historical data, never entered our minds. The "true" ministers of the Word of God saw to that. They denounced a critical approach to the sources of "the faith once delivered to the saints" as a satanic device to destroy that faith. They threatened would-be hearers of the liberal divines with hell-fire and damnation, and frightened the respectable bourgeois with predictions of anarchy, red radicalism and revolution to follow in the wake of a weakening of faith in the Bible. They used all the tricks the medieval monks applied to keep the peasantry in the thrall of feudalism.

Of the language that poured from the fundamentalist pulpits on the subject of what was called "the higher criticism" not much more need be said than that it made a mockery of that noble inscription above the portals of some of our churches: "Here stands a School of Exercise in Faith, Hope and Charity." Those Unitarian and modernist critics were vile heretics not to be touched with a pair of tongs. They were Cain slaying his brother Abel. They were the sons of Belial; the false priests of Baal whom Elijah, quite properly, too, put to the sword at the brook of

Kishon. They were symbolically likened to the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, for whose sins those cities were destroyed; yes, they were not infrequently placed in the company of the sinister Judas Iscariot who betrayed his Lord.

The noblest spirits of the age, Renan, Strauss, Kuenen, Van Maanen, Scholten, were covered with invective and epithets unmentionable. Every little *candidatus theologiae* on the fundamentalist side crowed like a riled rooster going to battle with a rival cock when he heard the word "modernist" mentioned. It was easily seen and felt that the brethren were frightened out of their wits, and that some lay awake nights trembling lest some scholar in a far-off study demolish one more little verse in their quasi-infallible book.

It is not to be inferred that scientific criticism of the sacred scriptures of Jews and Christians had its inception in our time in Holland. The traditional stories of the life of Jesus, as recounted in the four New Testament evangels or gospels, had seldom, since the Middle Ages, been free from attack and ridicule on the part of scholars and skeptics. Charles Guignebert cites the case of one Lorenzo Valla, an Italian humanist of the fifteenth century, who declared that his studies had convinced him that the gospel story was "full of holes, contradictions, unlikelihoods and obviously forged insertions." Before Hume, such English writers on theological questions as Cherburry, Locke, Toland, Collins and Tindal questioned the historical authenticity of the evangelical accounts.

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layers of legend, tradition and dogma in our gospels. "The French were fighting for an idea, for the right of free research and inquiry in all historical matters. They expected the triumph of that idea to be of decisive importance in the intellectual, moral and political emancipation of mankind."

The French philosophers, Guignebert notes, were breaking ground, and were using their attack on the gospels as a wedge to enter into the solid and inert mass of opinion of their day. They selected the subject of Jesus' life because that was the most carefully guarded taboo. By creating doubt and by shaking belief in the historical veracity of the traditional gospel story, they shook the authority of the priests who bend the necks of men and force them to believe.

Voltaire was out to "*écraser l'infâme*," to annihilate the darkness that wants to be darkness, the most puissant instrument in the hands of the kings and the political reaction. He had to be extremely careful and used various methods to inject the germ of doubt and revolt in the masses. In his *Philosophical Dictionary*, under the guise of refuting the doctrines of the Unitarian Faustus Socinus, he attacked the dogma of the divinity of Jesus.

Time and again pamphlets appeared in Europe, most of them in Holland, strange to say, purporting to contain the recovered papers of some great deceased thinker or other. This was the device frequently adopted to place an aspect of contemporary criticism of the sacred books before the public. Monks and priests had an ample share in that work of undermining belief in the miracles of the New Testament. The *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris has an entire section—under lock and key, of course—of books, pamphlets and brochures, emanating from clerical writers "refuting the veracity" and "denouncing the mendacity" of the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

All these documents, however, did not advance the science and true history of the origins of Christianity. They merely prepared the spirits of men for the birth of that science. They broke the taboo that made the orthodox tradition unassailable for nearly a thousand years. The scientific study of the sacred books did not come into its own until the eighteenth century. The origins, growth and evolution of that science have been described in masterly fashion by Albert Schweitzer in his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

The "modernist" revolt, if such it might be called, broke out in our own family circle one Sunday evening in 1910 when the reading for the day, in the presence of two visiting orthodox clergymen, consisted of that passage of Matthew's gospel which deals with the baptism of Jesus.

John, the reputed cousin of the Lord, is immersing vast multitudes from Jerusalem and from all over Judea in the Jordan. Suddenly he recognizes Jesus in the crowd and tells the people: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus asks to be baptized, and John, after hesitating briefly, complies with his request. Then, as the Nazarene leaves the water, a tremendous commotion takes place. The heavens are torn apart, the Spirit of God in the shape of a dove is seen to descend and to alight on Jesus, while a voice is heard saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Shortly thereafter, according to the New Testament narrative, John is thrown into prison by the Tetrarch Herod Antipas. While in prison, he is visited by some of his disciples, who tell him of the deeds of Jesus. John is greatly surprised, and, evidently, unconvinced, for he sends his disciples back to inquire of Jesus: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

When the Book was closed my father inquired some-

what perfunctorily if there were any questions. I do not think he really expected any, for it was Sunday evening and through the open window could be heard the tolling of the bells calling the townspeople to the last service of the Lord's Day. One of the visiting ministers, who was to preach the sermon, fidgeted nervously with the notes in his breastpocket. His colleague had already bowed his head preparatory to pronouncing the thanksgiving prayer.

My father sat back with a gesture of minatory surprise when one of the boys suddenly asked how it was possible that John the Baptist, who spoke in such glowing terms of the Lord Jesus to the multitudes assembled on the river banks, could have forgotten so quickly who Jesus was that he had to ask his disciples.

"How much time do you think elapsed," asked the boy, "between the Lord's baptism by John, and John's incarceration?"

"We do not know. The gospel does not specify," quickly interjected one of the ministers who seemed to catch the dangerous drift of the question. "It might well have been years and years. . . ."

"It could not have been more than two or three years at the most," ventured the boy, "for isn't that the total length of our Lord's ministry on earth? . . . What do you make of it that in one gospel, that of Matthew, John the Baptist recognizes the Lord from afar, while in Luke, John says that he does not know Jesus? Wasn't Jesus a cousin of the Baptist? Weren't their mothers related? And hadn't they spent their entire adolescence and youth together in Galilee? How do you explain these contradictions?"

"There are only seeming contradictions in the Bible," said one minister resolutely. "We know John was wearing a mantle of camel hair; probably the Lord also wore an unusual garment that day. Who can tell?"

"John the Baptist," the boy objected, "identifies Jesus before all the people as 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'" How could he possibly forget having seen the heavens tear apart, the Spirit of God descending in the shape of a dove and hearing a supernatural voice saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"? I'm sure nobody who saw such a sight could ever forget it. It's something to remember all your life. You could not forget it if you tried. Yet John the Baptist does forget. The Book says so. In prison he asks his visiting friends to go and inquire of Jesus who he is. Isn't that strange?"

"Not strange at all," said my father, his face lighting up with a half-plausible reply. "John may have suffered so much in prison that his senses were somewhat blurred. . . ."

Shortly thereafter came the clap of thunder occasioned by the publication of Arthur Drews's book, *The Myth of Jesus*, in which the historic existence of the Nazarene is denied outright. Other scholars, before Drews, had seen in the gospel stories a mythological drama, but their works were out of reach of the public. Drews was read by everybody. A copy of the *Myth* circulated surreptitiously amongst the members of the most advanced catechism class in our community.

To say that the fundamentalists were enraged is to put it mildly. Not only in Holland, but all over Europe they were up in arms. They held mass meetings from Berlin to Geneva, and from Oxford to Amsterdam to protest against what they called "the greatest blasphemy of all times." Their cry was: "Jesus lives!"

There was a mighty agitation in the religious journals, in the general press and in the pulpits, but in the end it died down as quickly as it had started. The seed of doubt had

been sown. It sprouted so rapidly that one of the luminaries of the Ecumenical Movement could say several decades later that the Christian religion would disappear from the European Continent in less than a century if "the present trend of unbelief produced by the skeptics keeps up."

If this comes about, it will not be the result of the scientific labors of students of the Bible. It will be traceable, in the main, to the internal organization of the Church, the separation of religion from moral life and the replacement of faith by dogma, summed up in that early word of the Church Father Tertullian: *nulla res tam nobis aliena quam publica*: Nothing is more alien to us [Christians] than public affairs.

The measure of your religion is your life, said Jesus in the parable of the Last Judgment. To Jesus, faith was a form of fidelity, the *hemuna* of the Prophets, the surrender of man's heart and intentions to God; the attachment of man's whole being to a power making for righteousness which permits him to fulfill his divine destiny, to renounce and overcome the inferior, primitive and animalistic qualities of his nature.

In the course of ages, the Church has replaced this spiritual quality, which permits of no intermediaries, with the materialist notion of faith, *i.e.* faith not as the translation of personal experience, but as something imposed from outside to which man is required to adhere without reservation. This is dogma.

One need only glance at the history of dogma to realize in what conditions the principal doctrines of the Church were born and elaborated. Christian thinkers, permeated with Greek and Alexandrine philosophy, a mode of

thought entirely at variance with that of the milieu which produced Jesus of Nazareth, borrowed heavily, for the definition of their doctrines, from the terminology and conceptions of the schools in which they grew up. For instance, the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, in promulgating the doctrine of the Trinity, set forth its conception of the divinity of Jesus. But the notion of the Trinity itself is alien to the gospel of Jesus. It was borrowed entirely from Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy.

The metaphysical personage who emerged from the creeds drawn up in that and in succeeding Councils, "conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, descended into hell, risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sitting on the right hand of God the Father," is not a human being. He is the Christ of the Church, a symbol borrowed from Greek philosophy and mythology. He is a dogma, a fleeting, unseizable image existing in the thought of schoolmen. He is not the Jesus of history, the man who lived and breathed and slept and died in Palestine at the beginning of the present era.

By the very definition of dogma as something absolute and unchangeable, the Christian Church is itself responsible for its immobilization and impotence in the struggle of life and the eternal evolution of ideas. "You vary," reproachfully exclaimed Bossuet to the Protestants of the sixteenth century. "You vary, and whatever varies or changes cannot be true."

The Protestants did indeed vary. They tried to go back to Jesus of Nazareth and to his gospel. They sought, with magnificent audacity, in the name of freedom of conscience, to give preëminence to life as against rites and dogmas. But they did not carry to a logical conclusion their efforts to restore the simplicity of Jesus. They were frozen

in their tracks, as it were, when they replaced the immutability of dogma with the unchallengeable authority of the Bible. They did not liberate themselves from the authoritarianism they set out to combat. The result is that, in the main, they have to this day no eye and no understanding for essentially religious movements operating outside the framework of their ecclesiastical formations. The Church Universal remains behind the times and allows itself to be overtaken and by-passed by the most generous initiatives of the modern conscience.

A grandiose and tragic duel has raged throughout the age of Christianity. Two conceptions confronted each other: what is, and what is to be; yesterday, and tomorrow. It is like a debate between an old man who shrilly defends his own truth and infallibility against younger men who refer back to the heart of the gospel and to the person of Jesus.

Again and again sects arise with the slogan: "Back to Jesus!" Again and again they are either annihilated by the official Church, or they petrify by becoming conformist, losing sight of the Man of Nazareth, and adopting in his place the sweetly innocuous Christ of St. Paul and the Church. In the presence of that duel, which goes on in our day, one cannot help thinking of what is probably an authentic saying of Jesus: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of God, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Men who break up the feudal latifundia and distribute the land amongst the poor peasants, perform a more Jesus-like act than all the prelates in purple raiment who defend the privileges and prerogatives of the old order in the name of religion.

Even if modern man has left the Church and Christi-

anity behind, he is not through with Jesus of Nazareth. To the man of the West, Jesus is like an old love with whom he has decided to break. The time has come to separate. But attempts at parting are so sad and poignant that the separation never really takes place. For a whole century the West has fought Christianity without being able to let go of Jesus. Sometimes men walk away from him in fury and contempt. They always come back with a remnant of hope. He is the love of their youth. His words, which remain as echoes in their hearts, trouble them to the very marrow of their bones.

I do not remember ever having been so shocked and disillusioned as that morning when Alfred Loisy, the master of the phalanx of modern investigators, remarked sadly at the close of a lecture at the *Collège de France* that he had reached the conclusion that the Sermon on the Mount was never pronounced by Jesus. "It is a collection of Hellenist maxims and aphorisms," he said, "which cannot have been formulated by a peasant of the mediocre intelligence of Jesus." One student burst into tears. Others left silently.

Through the nineteenth century runs the process of the separation of the purely historical Jesus from the object of the Christian faith's worship, the Christ. Jesus was seen successively as a reformer in the sense of modern liberalism, as the enlightened prophet persecuted in his day by the narrow-minded and the legalists; as the preacher of a humane system of ethics; as the martyr for freedom of the spirit. More modern are the attempts to involve Jesus in the social question and to see in him the absolute, the infinite in time.

The search goes on, the ardor of the investigators never slackens. They are driven as by a spell. The person of Jesus cannot be banished from history. He has become

ingrained in Western man's consciousness. It is as if men feel that there is in Jesus something of permanent content and value; a divine life for all lives and for all ages, for all manner of circumstances, and for all human hearts. In him all contradictions seem to resolve themselves. His gospel always remains the latest "good news."

How wondrous is the light that absorbs all the colors of the rainbow and pours itself out in a multi-colored grace!

You cannot read about sick souls and pathology and neurasthenia without thinking of Jesus as "the great physician." You cannot watch Ibsen's attempt to climb to a higher level than Christianity, in order to give the human soul back its legacy, without hearing Jesus' prophetic announcement of "a new heaven and a new earth." In Max Klinger's painting of Mount Olympus all the gods are thrown into consternation at the approach of Jesus, but Psyche (the human soul) tears herself loose from Amor's arms and throws herself at the Nazarene's feet. And Nietzsche: "I teach you the superman. . . . Man is something that must be overcome. . . . Not your sin, but your self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction cry to heaven." Isn't that a large fragment of the gospel of Jesus? Whosoever does not hear the penitential thunder of Socialism in the voice of its precursor: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths," is deaf to the gospel of Jesus with its demand for human solidarity and its passion for brotherhood.

In Jesus' name the Pauls and Peters conquered the world. For his sake the martyrs braved death in the arena. Little children feel attracted to him, and the soberest scholars cannot escape the fascination of his life and teaching. Rich and poor, old and young still want to meet Jesus.

The orthodox find in him a savior, the Unitarians an ideal. Buddha and Mohammed may be of immense significance to other groups of mankind; to the West they are of little account, because they have no history for us. Jesus lives in the history of the West. It was in his name that Ambrose and Polycarp and Boniface, Charlemagne, Anselm and Gregory the Great performed their deeds. Eckhart, Suso, Huss, Wyclif and Luther loved him, but so also did Francis of Assisi, Loyola, Fénelon and Pascal. Calvin was his disciple, but so was Servetus, and Borromeo and Zwingli and Zinzendorf and the Anabaptists of Leyden and Munster. Thomas à Kempis wrote *The Imitation of Christ*, but Agricola and Ruysbroeck and Erasmus were no less followers of Jesus. Knox and Wesley looked upon him as the fulfillment of God's promise, but so also did Schleiermacher and Channing and Kierkegaard and Ragaz and Masaryk. He was painted by the great artists from Tintoretto, Raphael and Rembrandt to Rubens, Uhde and Max Band. His presence is felt in the music of Palestrina, Bach, Handel and Mendelssohn. Beethoven goes hand in hand with Jesus as he leads us to the highest heaven of the Ninth Symphony. . . .

One man sees him in purple, the other in a mantle of camel hair. To one generation he was the judge, to another a gentle friend with whom they walked at eventide. Some found him harsh and inexorable, others glad and of good cheer. To some he is the good shepherd, to others the mystery of the ages. To the Greeks he was Orpheus, the heavenly singer, to the Teutons he was a leader. The Swiss have placed his emblem on their highest mountain peaks. The fishers of Crete and Cyprus still call on him in a storm: "*Iēsou Kyrie*, come over to us on the water!" The most gloomy and grim doctrinaires of Christendom, the Calvin-

ists of Holland, melt in tears when in triumphant joy the organ intones: "The name, the name above all other names, the lovely name of Jesus."

Once I saw a group of soldiers set a church on fire to dislodge the enemy who had fired on them from the belfry. It was in Spain in 1937. There was a strict order against looting. The least infraction of that rule was punishable by death. But some French anarchists went inside the church and pulled from the fire a statue of Jesus. "*Pourquoi ça? Pourquoi lui? Why? Why he?*" they were asked. "*C'est un des nôtres! He is one of ours!*" was the reply.

And this is what the Bolshevik poet Alexander Blok wrote of the liberation of Russian territory by the Red Army: "With an aureole of roses on his brow, by the side of the bloodstained banner, invisible in the raging snow, unwounded midst the bullets' flight, with gentle gait above the storm, at their head goes Jesus of Nazareth." And Volishin cried out at the Congress of Revolutionary Artists and Writers, held in Kiev in 1937: "Dissolve, Russia, dissolve and come to life, rise from the dead in the new Kingdom of Jesus."

Jesus is like a portent moving through two thousand years of history. No two minds form the same impression of him. Each man's "experience" of him is personal. Every epoch expresses in its own way and with its own words what "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard . . . the things which God hath prepared for them that love him . . ." the things that Jesus came to announce: the Kingdom of God on earth.

It is extremely difficult to uncover even a particle of the human Jesus as he lies hidden in our New Testament under the solid mass of stories, legends, ideas and doctrines. But there is one Ariadne's thread that may lead us to sep-

arate what is of Jesus and what is the schoolmen's. It is the undying love of the poor for Jesus. He was of the great prophetic line of Israel. He knew as well as we how much sin and envy and impurity and pettiness are mixed up with poverty. But he could never bring himself to speak a harsh word to the poor. He could not speak evil of the poor because he knew how much they had to put up with. He made himself consciously the center and the symbol of all those who are condemned and despised by the world, the outcasts, the harassed, the wounded and sick in body and spirit. Without the least self-interest, in fact against his own interests, and without the slightest desire to exalt himself, Jesus gave himself to and for the poor. He descended into the depths of the psychology of poverty and felt himself indivisibly united with the humblest of his people because he knew the truth of the rabbinical saying: *Ki mi b'ne 'aniyyim tetze Torah*, from the sons of the poor will go forth Torah, i.e. teaching, light, entertainment, truth and liberation. It is the poor, and not the doctrinaires, who have brought Jesus through the storms of the ages to us in the twentieth century. Every one of his words sounds the warning: Love your neighbor, forgive your brother, help him with all your soul and strength. . . . Not according to your dogmas, nor by your confessions and creeds, but by your attitude to the poor shall you be judged. . . . the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the wounded, the homeless, the sick and the prisoners who will bring judgment on this unconverted, unfeeling world. . . . "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If Jesus had been the morning light of the oppressed, at all times ready to stretch out his

hands and help, his memory would have been blotted out from the consciousness of western civilization.

In spite of the poetic, mythological and dogmatic varnish which overspreads the person of Jesus in the New Testament, a historic basis for his existence can still be found. That basis is made up of the simplest, the most sober and the most profoundly human elements. If the New Testament's narrative were entirely mythological, as certain scholars affirm, the myth-makers would have given an entirely different ending to their divine hero. They would have made far less mention of his human qualities and of certain ordinary everyday occurrences. He would have been presented as a god from start to finish.

I believe in the historical existence of Jesus, because I have seen the reflection of his face on the faces of the poor. With Jesus an immense hope swept through the world. That hope still lingers.

Our modern Christian faith (that *via media* as inner light, Gospel, man, history and nature) founded on God's revelation, teaches us that in all our actions and judgments the thought of what the Bible calls "the Kingdom of God" ought to be the guiding principle and the ultimate critical norm. In other words: as free, conscious and indispensable servants of God we may and must try to be God's collaborators in the building of His Kingdom. Aware that the absolute perfection of that Kingdom which knows no injustice, or sorrow, or poverty, or sorrow, or violence can never be fully attained, we must nevertheless strive ceaselessly in its direction by raising conditions, social, political and economic, in the direction of the Kingdom's demands.

That ideal of perfect justice, of love, organic human unity, truth and peace which is the messianic era described by Isaiah and which is to be the prelude to the establishment

of the Kingdom of God on earth, came to us of the West through the instrumentality of Jesus.

I believe that the hopes, aspirations and vision of Jesus were not limited to the immediate national restoration of his own people of Israel, but that they extend to our time, and into the future, to the holy community of mankind, the Kingdom of God, which will wipe out the last vestiges of poverty, ignorance and war, and that not in heaven, but here on earth.

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Jesus spent his childhood, adolescence and early manhood in Galilee, the northernmost province of Palestine. He was most probably born there, too; certainly not in Bethlehem. Except for the initial chapters of the New Testament story dealing with the star in the East, the arrival of the fabulous magi to salute the new-born child, the choir of angels singing to the shepherds, the decision of King Herod to kill all of Bethlehem's male children less than one year old, and the subsequent flight of Jesus' parents to Egypt to carry the infant to safety—except for this purely legendary material, all the references point to Galilee as the Lord's birthplace.

Research has established that the census mentioned in Luke's gospel, which is said to have brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, did not take place in the days of Caesar Augustus. But even if it had taken place, the Roman authorities would scarcely have been so foolishly incompetent as to order every man and woman "in the whole world" to return to the cities of their fathers for the registration. A census on that basis would have thrown the whole Empire

into chaos, with masses of people marching and counter-marching in all directions. The Romans were better administrators than that.

Contemporary historians who know a great deal of evil about Herod the Great, and who are not backward in telling us about that Edomite King on the throne of David, make no mention of the so-called "massacre of the innocents" in Bethlehem. The reason is that Herod was dead when Jesus was born. He had passed beyond good and evil, and no longer worried about the worms crawling in his flesh, or about the birth of a possible little rival of his dynasty. Both "the massacre of the innocents" and the flight to Egypt, as well as the birth in Bethlehem, are legends based on Old Testament texts that were made to apply to Jesus by the gospel writers many years after the Master's death. The legends took the place of authentic data which, it must be admitted, the evangelists lacked as sorely as does modern scholarship.

Of the day and month of Jesus' birth nothing is known. The celebration of his birthday on Christmas did not become customary until several centuries after his death, when it replaced the pagan feast of the sun entering the winter solstice.

His parents Joseph and Miriam (Maria in Latin) gave the little boy the name of Ya-hoshua when he was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. Ya-hoshua is not an uncommon name for Jewish boys, either then or now. It means, literally translated, Ya is my helper, or my comfort. Ya is a common abbreviation of Yahveh (God) in Hebrew names. The word Jesus is the latinized form of Ya-hoshua or Joshua.

Jesus had four brothers, who are all mentioned by name in the New Testament; Jacob or James, Josés, Simon

and Judah, and at least two sisters. Some of these may have been half-brothers or -sisters. If an old apocryphal tradition may be believed that Jesus' father was a widower, and his marriage to the youthful Mary his second venture into matrimony, it is not improbable that he brought some older children to the new household. Yet at least one of Jesus' brothers was, like him, the son of Joseph and Mary. The oldest tradition, found in Mark and Luke, has it that Jesus was Mary's "first-born," which implies that at least a second child was born to her and Joseph after Jesus.

The genealogical record in the first chapter of Matthew's gospel, tracing Jesus' descent, via Joseph and David to Abraham and Adam, is without the slightest historical value. That family tree was inserted belatedly to "prove" the heavenly child's descent from Israel's great king, because of an old saying amongst the Jews that the messiah-liberator would be born of David's house and blood, and in his native city of Bethlehem. In "proving" the Davidic descent of Jesus, however, the writer of St. Matthew's gospel tangles himself up in an inextricable contradiction. For if Joseph, as Matthew says, was of the house of David, and, at the same time, Jesus was not Joseph's son, but the product of a miraculous supernatural intervention, what sense is there to the whole family tree and the alleged Davidic ancestry of the child?

The oldest tradition knew nothing about Jesus' conception by the Holy Ghost. That doctrine made its appearance in Asia Minor, far from Galilee, in the third and fourth centuries when, in the course of a bitter theological debate, Jesus was declared the second person of the Trinity, and in the fourth century when the quarrel was renewed, and Mary, Joseph the carpenter's wife, was elevated to the rank of *theotokos* ("mother of God"). St. Paul, whose epis-

tles are older than our gospels, had never heard of Jesus' supernatural birth and never mentions it. In the gospels themselves it is plainly felt and recognized as an interpolation, an afterthought.

The so-called apocryphal gospels have a number of fantastic details about Jesus' childhood and youth, which the Church, for obvious reasons, did not include in the canon of the New Testament. For instance, the sect of the Docetae, mentioned in connection with the gospel of Peter, had it that Jesus was not born at all, but descended from heaven to Galilee in the form of a full-grown man. He was more of a phantom than a human being. St. Jerome, a Church Father of the fourth century who translated the Scriptures into Latin, complains that Jesus' blood was hardly dry on Calvary's hill when denials of his historical existence went the rounds.

Other apocryphal gospels, which have been preserved and which were held in high esteem in the early Christian communities of Asia Minor, tell of Mary, on her journey to Egypt, radiating a light that lit up the nocturnal darkness. At the moment of Jesus' birth, in a cave, these gospels inform us, birds were suspended in their flight. Oxen and donkeys knelt down. The one-day-old infant in the manger told his mother: "Maria, I am the son of God." The star that brought the magi to Bethlehem not only guided these men; it spoke to them. When the baby Jesus comes to Egypt, idols fall down at his approach, the sick are healed, bandits are converted, trees bend their branches downward to offer him dates and figs, fountains spring up from the desert to slake his thirst, lions and dragons follow him like kittens.

Jesus' mother receives a full share of the miraculous in the apocryphal gospels. Her birth, like her son's, came

about in a supernatural manner. As a child of three Mary was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem to be educated there. She danced on the third step of that edifice and so charmed the beholders that all the people loved her. She had blond hair and brown eyes and at the age of twelve was married to Joseph. Years later when her mortal existence ceased, she did not die in the accepted sense but was wafted to heaven on the hands of angels.

All these stories were put down in gospels which, in the judgment of the Church, are not to be considered genuine, but apocryphal, *i.e.* of "hidden" origin. They were composed between the years 150 and 500 of the present era. Of all the gospels that circulated in the Near East for the first four or five centuries after Jesus' death—there were probably as many as twenty or thirty—the Church retained as authentic only the four which are found in our New Testament under the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

As far as contemporary records are concerned, Jesus might as well never have existed. There is not the least reference to him, or to his alleged "mighty works" anywhere. The New Testament, of course, is not contemporary with Jesus, nor is it to be regarded as history. A letter exists, it is true, said to have been written by Pontius Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius setting forth many details of Jesus' life, teachings, death and resurrection. But that letter was proven to be a forgery from the hand of Tertullian, a Christian apologist who flourished in the latter part of the second century. The brief mention of Jesus in Josephus' *Wars of the Jews* has long since been recognized by all reputable savants as an interpolation.

In modern Nazareth, the visitor is shown two different places where Mary is said to have stood when the angel

announced her pregnancy and Jesus' coming birth. The Greek Orthodox monks defend the authenticity of one spot, while the Latins guarantee the genuineness of the other. Both sides claim that angels revealed the site to them. In a field near Bethlehem there still stands a crumbling chapel on the spot where the angels are said to have appeared to the shepherds. In the Italian town of Loreto one may see the house in which Joseph and "the holy family" once resided in Nazareth. It is thirty-seven feet long and seventeen wide, and of Sicilian marble. It does not look very much like a poor man's carpenter shop.

How did it get to Loreto in Italy? Angels picked it up in Nazareth, Palestine, in the thirteenth century, and carried it across mountains and seas overnight.

The real house in which Jesus lived, probably in Nazareth, was very likely a one-room, one-story cottage of the primitive type and design still encountered all over the Arab world. Constructed of blocks of white chalk, held together by dried mud, it formed a striking contrast to the green cypress trees which grew densely on the rocky promontory where Nazareth stood. There was only one door in Jesus' paternal home, and no window. Whatever light the family had came through that door and a small hole in the roof.

On the hard earthen floor, at the side of the room, lay some mats of woven black goat hair and a few woolen blankets. These served as chairs and sofas in the daytime and as beds at night. Above the beds Joseph had fastened some planks for the household utensils; a few earthen cups, a lamp, bottles for oil and some pots and jars. Mary and her little daughters did most of the cooking outside the house,

on a small oven built against the back wall. But there was a stove inside the house, too. It stood in the middle of the room. It was rather a large earthen bowl in the shape of a round-bellied bottle, with a small aperture at the bottom to let in the draft, and a larger hole at the top for the fuel. Galilean peasants did not have the metal braziers found in aristocratic homes in Jerusalem, Jericho, or Samaria. Wood and dried grass and camel dung were the usual combustibles in Joseph's place, as in all Galilean cottages of the first century, and after.

When the fire burned and the charcoal smoldered, smoke filled the room from top to bottom till tears ran from the eyes of the occupants and they coughed with the irritation in their throats. Thus it is to this day in Arab cottages.

The spare clothing was kept in a big painted cupboard of Joseph's own manufacture. The broad polished board which was laid on two supports when the family sat down to dinner, was also his handiwork. Jesus and his little brothers and sisters, three on each side of the board, sat with crossed legs; Joseph and Mary sat at opposite ends of the table.

What did they eat? Figs, cooked and raw; pottage of lentils, grapes, preserved olives, bread and honey, meat; and especially fish fried in olive oil, the chief staple of that vigorous and healthy Galilean peasantry of Jesus' time.

They drank mostly water, but also fermented goat milk, and, on special occasions, the sour red country wine, which was kept in a goatskin. The big brown earthen jar containing the drinking water stood in the shade outside the door. Its mouth was corked with a bundle of fresh laurel leaves. The supply was refreshed each evening shortly before sundown when Mary or one of her growing

daughters went to the communal well. Women carried these jars on their heads, as they still do in Nazareth. The well was a pleasant place to meet friends and neighbors, to gossip and exchange news. Many a romance ripened there.

Outside, before the threshold, stood the sandals of the whole family. Indoors they walked barefooted. On the doorpost was attached the tiny metal tube which can be seen on the houses and apartments of pious Jews all over the world to this day. This tube, or *mazuza*, contained a piece of parchment on which were written a few verses from the Scriptures. It served as a silent reminder to the occupants of the house and to strangers that here dwelt people whose God was Yahveh.

On the outside of the house at Nazareth was a stairway leading to the flat roof. The roof itself was made of a mat of woven twigs on top of which was deposited a thick layer of earth. Here Mary dried her rye and wheat before taking it to the mill to be ground into flour. In the summer-time the family lived on the roof and slept there. Mary did her weaving there and the children played. A low wall or parapet kept them from falling off. Below in the yard Joseph was busy with his carpentry, although in winter-time, which is the rainy season, he worked indoors.

Joseph made plows and yokes and rakes and other agricultural implements, occasionally a cupboard or a box. He was paid for his products in kind: foodstuffs or wool. Mary spun the wool herself, dyed it and sewed it into blankets and clothing for the children, her husband and herself. She also baked her own bread and even ground her own wheat at the miller's; but for this she had to bring a neighbor along, or one of the boys. For the millstones were heavy and a frail woman could not manipulate them alone. Jesus undoubtedly helped his mother when his turn came.

He was to refer to millstones several times in the course of his preaching career.

There was no doubt a synagogue at Nazareth and an elementary school or *cheder* where he and his brothers were taught the rudiments of reading and writing. The evidence on the existence of schools in the Palestine of Jesus' day is conflicting. According to the Talmud, a system of primary education was not introduced in the Holy Land till the year 65 by the High Priest Joshua ben Gama, a good half century after Jesus' birth. Other sources, such as Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus the historian, intimate that a methodical study of the Books of Moses, the Psalms and the Prophets was general throughout Palestine toward the beginning of the Christian era.

Whatever the date, the method of instruction could have but little appeal to the intelligence of children. Doubtless it did not differ a great deal from the system in vogue in backward Arab countries today where one hears school-children recite or yell portions of the Koran in unison, in a monotonous sing-song voice with the teacher standing over them armed with a stout cudgel. The sacred texts were literally drilled into the pupils' memory. In fact the Hebrew word *sanah*, to learn, meant originally to repeat.

However, the language Jesus spoke was not Hebrew, but Aramaic. Aramaic was his mother tongue. It is doubtful that he spoke much Hebrew. When the gospel writers want to impress their readers with a direct quotation from Jesus, they use Aramaic words as in the case of *talitha kumi*, "arise, daughter," words spoken to the dead daughter of Jairus, and later on the cross, *Eli, Eli lama sabachtani?*—"My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" It was in Aramaic that he read from the Scriptures when in later life the *chazan*, or ceremonial chanter, handed him the

scroll in the Galilean synagogues and he added a few words of comment. According to Goguel, Guignebert and Loisy his knowledge of the Scriptures did not extend beyond some portions of the Prophets and Psalms. He never gained the title of rabbi, or master in Israel.

Many times, one may imagine, the schoolmaster told stories from the Scriptures; of Moses and the exodus from Egypt and the wanderings in the desert, of God giving the Law on Mount Sinai and the food that rained from the heavens in the wilderness. Further, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the patriarchs and legendary founders of the nation; of Joseph and his eleven brothers; of Rachel, Rebecca and Deborah; of the miraculous fall of Jericho's walls at the blast of trumpets; of Jephthah and his daughter; and the immensely strong Samson who effectively fooled the enemy by carrying away on his shoulders the gates of Gaza, the city in which the Philistines had trapped him. There is no question but that the phenomenal career of David, who rose from the leadership of a band of outlaws to kingship in Jerusalem, was a favorite topic in the school of Nazareth, no less than the stirring epic of Maccabeus and his war against the Greeks. There certainly was no lack of material.

Discipline was not too strict in the schools of the first century, and classes lasted no more than an hour or so a day. The rest of the time Joseph the carpenter's boys and girls played around in the streets with other peasant children, or they made an excursion to the shores of the Sea of Galilee to watch the fishermen sail their boats, to see the women weave and boil nets by the water's edge, to swim and perhaps to try and catch a few fish themselves. Galilean children were not afraid of a few miles' hike to fetch some provender for mother's frying pan.

The apocryphal gospels give a few samples of the games the little Jesus and his brothers and sisters played. Stripped of their magic and sorcery, such as the account which makes clay pigeons in Jesus' hands turn into live birds and fly away, these stories do not sound unreasonable. Children were allowed to have a dog or a little lamb to play with. From balls of moistened clay they fashioned donkeys, camels, sheep, goats, small loaves of bread, little houses. The girls made dolls, of course. One gospel tells of Jesus behaving exactly like little American boys, in making a small artificial lake equipped with dikes and sluice gates, and sailing a boat on the water.

Sometimes a score of children pretended to celebrate a wedding. The boys "played Indian," re-fighting the battles their forefathers had waged against Philistines, Amelekites, Edomites, and the like. Or they pretended that they were Daniel in the lions' den, some acting the part of the growling beasts, while one—why not Jesus?—impersonated God's faithful prophet. In the spring every Palestinian village had its Play of the May King, when one of the boys was crowned with a garland of fresh flowers and was hoisted on a throne and then saluted by everybody as if he were a real monarch. That annual feast, which is the mother of the medieval mystery plays, is being revived today in the reborn State of Israel.

Galilean children were of course educated "in the fear of the Lord," very much like the children of English Puritans or of Swiss or Scottish Calvinists. "Paradise is at the knees of the mother," and "God cannot be everywhere, hence He created the mothers," are two ancient Jewish sayings. When Mary talked to her children of Yahveh, she pictured God as a loving Father who, if they were obedient to Him, cared for them as much as for the rich man's

children and for the whole people of Israel. Yahveh was their God and protector and they were His chosen people. Who knows if Mary did not sing the little ones to sleep with melodies from the 145th Psalm: "Yahveh is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy . . ." or from the 103rd Psalm: "Bless Yahveh, O my soul, and forget none of his kindly acts. . . ." Mothers have sung their children to sleep throughout the ages.

As soon as the children could talk, they recited the *Schma Israel* with father Joseph twice a day. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and in the gates."

Joseph wakened his boys at the first streaks of dawn. They fastened the phylacteries upon their foreheads, that "frontlet between thine eyes," a tiny square box containing again the memorial verses of the *Schma Israel*, the same words that were written on the parchment in the tube on the doorpost. Then they tied the *tefilim*, or prayer straps around their left arms and turned their faces in the direction of Jerusalem. They thanked God for the blessing of having been born Jews, *i.e.* that God had revealed Himself to the people of Israel in preference to all other nations, and to have made them His own. In the evening, at sunset, they prayed again.

On the seventh day, the Sabbath, Joseph, true to the divine prescription, spoke more at length to his children of the deeds and words of the God of their fathers, of His loving care, of His mercy and promise. The Jews of Galilee, like those of Judea and elsewhere, were occupied and preoccupied with religion night and day. Jesus followed quite naturally in that path.

The narrow, alley-like streets of Nazareth, or, for that matter of any Galilean town of Jesus' time, ran like the spokes of a wheel into the hub of the market place. There the whole community gathered, and many from the farms outside, adults and children alike, especially on market days. There Jesus and his youthful companions wandered between the booths of the merchants, the stalls of the artisans and the tables of the hucksters. There the air was filled with the shouts and cries of the vendors offering their wares for sale, the bleating of sheep and goats, the cackling of chickens and geese, the lowing of cattle, the barking of dogs and the braying of donkeys in the side streets. Most of the inns, the so-called *khans* and taverns of the city, were located on the market place. There stood the rows of camels, patiently chewing their hay, waiting to carry the visiting merchants back home in the evening.

In later life Jesus often spoke of the things he saw in the market place of Nazareth. For there, in a corner by the gate, stood the laborers to be hired. There, in a shady nook by the wall, sat the elders gravely discussing weighty matters of religion and politics. There were the moneychangers and the letter writers and the storytellers, sitting on their haunches, waiting for trade.

In that market place could be seen such girls as Mary

from the town of Magdala who came to exhibit and sell garments of dyed wool which they manufactured at home; tunics, cloaks, tassels, curtains, wedding gowns and underwear. There were the swarthy glassblowers from the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon who showed passers-by how they made bottles and jars and cups of all sizes and colors.

Here a man from Tarichaea offered fish and dried locusts, considered a great delicacy; olive oil from Gischala, honey from Safed, wine from Sigona. Once in a while, when Joseph had a good week, or when a religious holiday approached, Mary and her little daughters stopped at that stall to buy some honey-cakes and candies which were made from grape juice boiled to a thick syrup.

Beside huge clusters of fresh grapes and melons from the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the fruit stalls offered olives, dates, figs, cucumbers, onions, leeks, garlic, lentils, eggs and salt. Next to the fruit stalls might be seen a booth which the women and girls approached with scarcely concealed awe and childish delight. Here were exhibited finely carved bracelets of silver and gold, filigree work for brooches and belt clasps, anklets and earrings, wedding rings and necklaces. Mary did not often make a purchase here. She was too poor. But Jesus, the boy with all-seeing eyes, never passed without staring in amazement at the costly wares and the persons who were rich enough to buy them.

The baker who lived on the market place, one may be sure, never failed to draw Jesus' attention. He and his helpers kneaded the dough in full view of the public and withdrew the crackling flat round loaves from the oven. The potters and their wheels were not far away, and the ironmongers with their tiny furnaces and blowpipes. The leather merchants offered sandals, slippers, phylacteries and

amulets, small leather medallions with magic signs burnt into them to ward off evil spirits and influences.

Most interesting to watch, no doubt, were the goings-on at the booths of the itinerant physicians, dentists and apothecaries. Around these men congregated the sick and the suffering, the ailing, the halt and the blind. Lepers, with their hideous sores, were allowed to approach to obtain salves and ointments on condition that they shouted "unclean, unclean," or made a noise with a small wooden rattle to give healthy persons a chance to move out of the way. Against insomnia the doctors prescribed the eggs of grasshoppers, of which they carried a large quantity. The teeth of foxes ground to a powder were deemed a cure for a sore throat. The boiled seed of anemones was considered a capital remedy for baby complaints. For stomach disorders the apothecaries carried the most inconceivable, and some unmentionable, medicaments. Herbs were their chief stock in trade.

Popular belief attributed sickness chiefly to the presence of devils in the stricken person. Devils were thought to be the souls of those restless giants who are mentioned in the Book of Genesis as dwelling on earth in the days of Enoch and Noah, those giants "who married the daughters of men." Devils had not yet made hell their habitat. They moved there only after the establishment of the Christian religion. In Jesus' time they roamed at will, and often took up their abode in men or in animals.

Every evil, ailment, sickness or complaint for which the physicians could not account, was attributed to the presence of devils in the patient. Some individuals had not merely one devil in them, but were said to harbor an entire congregation. Especially afflicted with devils were persons suffering from epilepsy, moon sickness, insanity, nervous disorders and severe headaches.

Physicians tried to eject these devils by means of magic formulas, by incantations and by mysterious gestures over the patients. Often the voice of the physician, or the touch of his hands had a wondrously calming effect on the sufferers. There is no doubt that the boys and girls of Nazareth often looked on as a wonder-worker treated a man or a woman for mental and nervous ailments. As a matter of fact, it was noticed as Jesus grew older that he was himself extraordinarily endowed with power to heal. His approach often calmed men and women whose bodies were twisted and torn by spasms. A certain psychic power emanated from him. A mere word of his, a touch brought instantaneous comfort. But as a child and as a young man he knew not himself that he possessed these powers.

Nazareth lay very near the highway from Egypt to Damascus; some say the road passed right through the town. Not infrequently Jesus and his friends must have watched the strings of camels going in either direction, and observed the drivers and the slaves they carried, and marveled or joked at the outlandish clothes these men and women wore and the puzzling unintelligible language they spoke.

Three times a year the villagers and townsmen of Galilee made up their own caravans. That was when they went to Jerusalem for the national religious feasts in the Temple. Then there was such a hustle and bustle on the roads, such shouting and singing and dancing that the hills reverberated with the noise. Pilgrims from the remotest nooks of the province, and no doubt many Jews from Syria and Sidon, from the regions of Lake Huleh and even further away in foreign lands, joined the native Palestinians in the joyous march on the Holy City. Children did not accompany their parents until they were of age. When Jesus was twelve years old he went along to be *Bar Mitzvah*, i.e. he

participated in a religious ceremony of adoption into the community of Israel. After that he was considered responsible for his own acts and words.

On the occasion of that visit, an incident occurred that was to become the subject of many an edifying picture and homily: the Christ-boy disputing with the Doctors of the Sacred Law. It is of course not inconceivable that the boy Jesus met some of the scribes and priests in Jerusalem. After all, he had to pass a bit of an examination. He had to read and recite a few texts before he could be initiated into the community of Israel, but as to his explaining the meaning of certain prophecies concerning the messiah to the erudite, one may safely shrug one's shoulders. That is hagiography pure and simple, pious commentary inserted into the gospels to impress the reader with the superior qualities, even in youth, of the man who was to be proclaimed after his death to the status of a deity.

On the way back to Galilee, Jesus' parents miss him. But thinking him somewhere in the throng of homegoing pilgrims, with relatives or friends from Nazareth, they do not worry till evening. Then they return to Jerusalem and find him three days later in the Temple. He is busy teaching the teachers. His mother gently scolds him for causing so much trouble, whereupon he replies with the enigmatic question: "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Luke's gospel adds: "And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them."

Mary does not understand, Joseph does not understand. Mary and Joseph, the gospel reader has been informed earlier, were both visited by angels. They were

told things about Jesus' birth and life that could not, one should think, so easily be forgotten. How is it that they are so thoroughly surprised only twelve years later? Did not Mary know that Jesus was supernaturally conceived, and born in a way that no other creature—except in Greek mythology—was ever conceived or born?

“Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” No, they knew it not. They knew it not, because they had never heard of the boy's miraculous birth. Only Luke the evangelist, about seventy years later, had heard of it. But by that time Joseph and Mary and Jesus himself were dead and could not set the gospel writer straight. The story of Jesus' virgin birth came into circulation long after his death.

One incident, however, that did occur in Jesus' youth, but which is only cursorily mentioned in the New Testament, must have made a deep impression on the boy. It was the popular revolt initiated by Judas the Gaulonite, or Judas the Galilean. Many messiahs arose in the days of the Second Temple, particularly in Jesus' lifetime. They and their followers were all crushed. But Judas the Galilean had a temporary success. He came from Northern Galilee and roused the countryside against the Roman usurper. With bands of armed men he attacked certain Roman garrisons, probably the fortress built by Herod the Great at Sepphoris, about three miles from Nazareth. He ambushed a few cohorts that were sent from Jerusalem to restore order, and wiped them out. But that was the end of him. The Procurator dispatched a full legion to Galilee. The rebels broke ranks when they saw the Roman military machine go into action. They were overtaken by the cavalry

as they fled. Many were massacred. Thousands of prisoners were crucified.

Jesus must have seen some of those Gaulonites who threw the whole of Galilee into an uproar in his youth. He may have listened to Judas himself preaching revolt in Nazareth's market place. Later, when the insurrection collapsed, he heard the clash of arms, the shouting and the tumult of battle, as fleeing groups of messianist rebels made their last stand in the hills before being overwhelmed by Roman power. He could not have failed to see along the highway as far as the eye could reach the long rows of crosses to which the captured rebels had been nailed. The whole brief but bloody affair took place in the immediate vicinity of Nazareth.

It is sometimes said that the inhabitants of Galilee were racially impure and hence that Jesus was not really a Jew. While it is true that Galilee (the word means "circle") was once known as Galilee of the Gentiles, this appellation occurs only in connection with the time when the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel were destroyed. Many thousands of the inhabitants of Palestine were then deported to Babylon, and the northernmost districts of the conquered and half-emptied land settled with Chaldean colonists.

After the Babylonian Exile, when the deportees and their descendants returned, these Chaldean settlers remained. The province was then called Galilee of the Gentiles. But these strangers scarcely differed in features, general appearance, speech and mode of life from the returning Jews. They adopted the Jewish religion, and were soon completely assimilated. This happened some 600 years before Jesus' birth. In his day, his native province was simply known as Galilee, no longer Galilee of the

Gentiles. To have called it otherwise might have spelled trouble. The Galileans were intense Jewish nationalists.

Because of such statements made by Jesus in later life as that he "saw Satan as a bolt of lightning fall from heaven," and his prediction that his followers would witness wars and earthquakes and disasters in diverse places, identifying the times in which they lived with what the rabbis called the "Birthpangs," or "Woes of the messiah," as well as his hearing "voices" in the manner of Joan of Arc, as on the occasion of his baptism by John on the shore of Jordan, and again when the Greeks wanted to speak to him—because of these and similar reports, it has been thought that Jesus was endowed with what is commonly known as "second sight." He has also been thought a visionary of the type of the author of the Book of Revelation, or Emanuel Swedenborg. Some savants, like Binet-Sanglé, de Loosten and William Hirsch, have gone so far as to stamp Jesus as the victim of visual hallucinations, an insane mystic, mentally deranged, delirious half the time.

Jesus was neither the one nor the other. He was not a visionary and he was not subject to sickly visions; nor was he the paranoiac Binet-Sanglé makes him out to be. In the case of the Galilean boy we have to do with a manner of seeing and hearing that may be approached through a science that has come into existence only in the last quarter century and that is still in its infancy. This method is known as the eidetic way of seeing.

The word is derived from the Greek *eidos*, which means simply: form, image, representation. *Eidos* survives in the English word idol, but in English it has acquired a different meaning: the image or effigy of a false god.

This seeing things eidetically occurs in varying degrees of intensity and clarity. Dr. A. M. Brouwer, a Dutch scholar of renown, cites the case of a fourteen-year-old high school student who, after having examined a very complicated drawing for only one minute, was placed before a white wall, and could then recall with amazing accuracy all the 216 details of that drawing and name them without a single error. After seventeen minutes, however, the boy lost sight of the drawing, so to speak, and no longer remembered its details.

This was a case of what Dr. Brouwer calls "*reproductive* eidetic seeing." The high school boy reproduced in his mind's eye all the intricacies of the drawing. Painters and sculptors are often endowed with this capacity for photographic sight. But there is also a *productive* eidetic sight. What the person imagines, what he thinks of, he sees clearly before him, quite accurately, in all its details, as if the material were before him in a visible, tangible form. The *productive* eidetic seer has no model or guide to go by.

"I once sat opposite a mother and her three-year-old daughter in a streetcar," remarks Dr. Brouwer. "The mother was, as mothers often are, in deep and animated conversation with another woman. Suddenly the child spoke up and said: 'Mother, I have a little dog here!' 'Well,' replied the mother, 'why don't you pick it up and put it on your lap, so that it may also look out of the window?' The child bent down and gestured as if she were picking up a dog from the floor. She took it under her arm, petted it by stroking its head, and explained to the invisible animal different things passing and occurring outside the streetcar. The child was occupied with the dog until the car stopped. Then the period of eidetic seeing came to an end."

Most people have experience with, or know of, chil-

dren who are able to improvise a whole zoölogical garden with nothing at all. The different imagined animals have their own cages and perform all manner of tricks. And woe to the adult who does not see anything of this game, or, who, without paying attention, walks heedlessly through the imaginary collection of animals. The child will protest angrily as if the intruder had indeed trampled upon a real cage or crushed real animals.

It has been established, says Dr. Brouwer, that sixty per cent of all children (in Holland) see eidetically. At school, however, where education trains the intellect, the power of eidetic seeing diminishes rapidly, so that in most cases it has begun to disappear at the age of twelve. After the sixteenth year no traces are found.

Still, there are some people who retain the power to see eidetically all their lives. What they think, what they imagine, they actually see before them in real colors, shape and size. Imagined objects or scenes are as visible, tangible or sometimes as audible to them as if they existed in reality. From this capacity is derived the so-called "second sight" which is unquestionably very strong in certain individuals, and which enables them to see events in advance. Persons endowed with this extraordinary quality are usually highly sensitive, almost supersensitive; their minds are as finely attuned and receptive as radar or radio antennae. Poets and writers may fall in this class.

Eidetics are not confined to visual representations. The concept has been given a wider significance by applying it to persons who have a capacity to hear things which they imagine or, let us say, to call forth a pain by strongly thinking of it. Nearly everyone knows of some individuals who are quite certain that they hear music, sometimes an entire symphony orchestra playing, "in their heads." As to the

evocation of pain or bodily distress, the phenomenon is common enough. Every practicing physician or psychoanalyst has encountered cases, and sometimes cured them by mere suggestion, proving that there was no actual pain or distress.

Eidetic qualities appear not only in different degrees, but also in different forms. Some eidetically endowed persons are able to make images and objects and whole scenes appear before their mind's eye at will and make them disappear at will also. Of others it can be said that they receive what they see eidetically without being able to do anything about it. They cannot dismiss the impressions, visual or audible, which appear before them. Often these persons are plagued with frightening images. These may transform themselves into pseudo-hallucinations, or genuine hallucinations.

Hallucinations in themselves are not invariably a symptom of illness, although they are frequently connected with disturbances of the mental apparatus. Pseudo-hallucinations are representations of strong sensory power which come into existence without exterior influence. They do not have the character of absolute reality. In this category must be placed certain apocalyptic visions, such as those of the seer of Patmos who wrote the Book of Revelation. That visionary does not say he actually saw a given scene or object, but he qualifies his experience by stating that he saw "as it were," as if there were this or that to be seen.

Jesus was not a visionary because the visionary sees the content of his own consciousness before him in an image, as does the dreamer in his sleep. In the Book of Revelation, the seer beholds all sorts of fragmentary recollections which he pieces together into what often turns out to be a fantastic and incomprehensible ensemble. He gets his images

from books and weird sayings and from reports of mystical experiences, and he combines them, as in a dream, into a strange, erratic, inconstant whole.

The boy Jesus was strongly endowed eidetically. He could bring whole scenes before his eyes at will. In later life when he had a message to deliver he drew upon the images he saw to illustrate the spiritual truth which he thought men needed to hear. The soul estranged from God he compared with a lost sheep which the shepherd goes out to seek and find. To the poor he promised paradise which was as real to him as if he had visited it in person. It was indeed real to him, not because he had seen it, but because of his frequent thoughts about it. For that reason, too, God was to him a Father who regulates the life of His creatures down to the most minute detail. Therefore, too, he was plunged in such dire anguish when, in suffering on the cross, he suddenly realized that the mental picture of God he had entertained and nourished all his life, did not correspond with the reality.

Wandering around Galilee in the days of his youth, he saw things others did not see, or rather he saw with those eidetic eyes of his more than others saw. He sensed the spiritual significance behind the phenomena of nature. His creed seemed inexpressible, both in words and thought, but he felt God as the all-pervading influence, the only refuge in the essential emptiness of the world. The being of God he brought instinctively into rhythm with all life.

In St. Paul's writings we find the abstract dissertation of someone who seeks comparisons to clarify, or to illustrate, his argument. Jesus often talks in parables. But these parables are concrete. He sees his environment as an image of the invisible world. Jesus thinks in images. He does not argue or try to prove anything. He speaks with authority.

In order to express a spiritual truth he gives an image, a picture, often in the form of a story. St. Paul comes with an argument, a theory. He seeks to persuade, to convince. In Jesus' teachings there is nothing academic, philosophical (in the sense of deep erudition) or argumentative. For that reason his words are far more direct and intimate. He is easily understood by the untutored, by the common people to whom he addresses himself.

Lying awake at night on the roof of his father's house in Nazareth, looking up at the stars running in their appointed courses, he felt the marvelous precision of the stellar system as symbolical of the order that could be instituted in human affairs by establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. He felt the pain of the world and the secret inescapable urge which drives mankind with a beckoning spell to fulfillment and perfection. Stars, planets, landscapes, social systems, men moved before his mind's eye towards a sure, appointed destiny. He felt the unity of God and the world. He called up before his mind's eye the image of a strifeless world which the Prophets had passionately evoked before him, when men would act as brothers towards their fellows, and no man or nation would even think of causing hurt or damage to another man or nation. He saw his people Israel free and happy, liberated from the alien's iron yoke. But the oppressors, too—for his love embraced the entire human race—he saw brought under the loving, fatherly sway of the theocracy of Israel's God. He saw the possibility of an era of justice and righteousness, in which there would be no more tears and suffering as the result of hatred or oppression, and when no man would need to die without having experienced the goodness of God's earth and God's sun.

To indulge this dream he often went alone into the

hills and into the desert. For in the solitude he heard more certainly the living word he carried in his own heart. There it became irresistible, overpowering, living fire. There, in his loneliness, Israel seemed to him to be the predestined trail blazer of God's reign. Israel was a nation of dry souls ready to be set aflame. All that was required was a prophet to hurl the fire of God into the world. Would he be that prophet, that messenger of the Most High? Would he be the champion of the highest justice? No doubt he often thought of the future.

He sought the loneliness of the hills and the austerity of the desert to stop and think of the meaning of life and of the work he was to undertake, before allowing himself to become immersed in useless and harmless affairs that later absorbed him to the exclusion of all opportunity for calm reflection. His meditations led him to the conclusion that the things which happen to us are not our lives, but that they are imposed upon our lives, and that life itself is a secret communing with God. In his youthful wanderings in Galilee he attained the sure trust and compassion which forced him to announce the good tidings, the happy news of a better day to his countrymen groaning under the might of Rome.

It is no wonder that mystical experiences are had in Galilee . . . and that, on the other hand, members of the noble Aryan race often lose caste there. The sloping hills, gentle and never abrupt, are green as emeralds in the spring. In Jesus' day the land was studded with towns and villages and cottages and life, all on a humble scale. The climate, the scenery, a welter of light and shade dappled with silvery patches, are like an endless stretch of miniatures in a precious Book of Hours. At night the rustling olive trees are like fine filigree work fashioned by angel craftsmen.

The air is charged with grace and quiet loveliness. Few visitors have remained insensible to Galilee's subtle charm. Renan went into ecstasies. Pierre Loti first burst into raptures, and then acquired from the atmosphere what all religious people seem to need: something to torment themselves with. Others, like the phlegmatic Calvinist Abraham Kuyper, Prime Minister of the Netherlands, have felt the beauty of Galilee, its riot of vegetation after the rainy season, as a disturbing spell that got on their nerves.

Moved by its varying influences, which they experience almost as an emotional stimulant, many northern natures are affected to such an extent by the quiet splendor of Galilee that their stability is shattered. They become fluid, unbalanced and go to pieces.

From Nazareth to the most distant place in Galilee was scarcely more than a day's walk. In fact nearly half the territory of Palestine was visible from the terrace on which Nazareth was located. To the north lay row upon row of low hills, with the snow-capped mountain of Hermon in the distance. But five miles eastward sparkled the blue Sea of Galilee, while the eye could follow the course of the Jordan River for nearly twenty-five miles towards the Dead Sea. Westward was the Mediterranean seacoast and, near the site of the present port city of Haifa, the harbor of Ptolomais. Caesarea, the residence of the Roman governor, was not far off. In the immense plain of Esdraelon to the south, known today as the Emek, the center of modern Jewish colonization, ran the tortuous stream Kishon which once swallowed up the iron chariots of the Canaanite Sisera, an event which inspired Deborah to sing her sanguinary war song. Through this valley marched

the armies of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, Pompey, and of Napoleon in modern days. On this highway, between Egypt and the empires of Bablyon and Persia, great battles were fought between the colossi of another age for mastery of the world.

No doubt Jesus and his playmates often walked to Cana, or to Sepphoris, which was the provincial capital where stood the palace of Herod the Great, as well as the Roman arsenal and the barracks of the garrison. Sepphoris boasted an amphitheater and baths, as well as a race course. The chief language spoken there was Greek. Galilean boys of Jesus' time certainly did not linger long in the heathen environment of that foreign city. Since the days of Judas Maccabeus, who had cleansed the Jewish land of Greek influences a hundred and fifty years earlier, all things Greek were held in detestation by intense nationalists, such as the Galileans were as a rule. Did Jesus know Greek? Not a word of it. In Galilee the people said: "Whoever teaches his son Greek is as bad as one who keeps swine."

Across the plain of Esdraelon lay the village of Endor where the witch, at the king's command, had called up the spirit of the prophet Samuel. From that apparition Saul heard the announcement of the ghastly fate that was to overtake him and his son Jonathan on the following day in the battle with the Philistines on nearby Gilboa's heights. Here David lamented over "the mighty that are fallen," and "the weapons of war that have perished."

To the south stood the bluish purple wall of Moab's mountains as a protection against the Arabian desert and its roving tribes of Bedouins. Frequently the boys de-

scended into the plain to walk as far as the wells of Enganim, the first night's camping place of the pilgrims on their triannual visits to the Holy City. They were then not more than a few hours' distance from Sichem, the ancient capital of the Samaritans, and from the brand-new city of Sebaste, with its marble palaces gleaming in the midday sun.

What did the Man of Nazareth look like? Although he was unquestionably of Semitic origin, that is to say a son of one of those eastern Mediterranean peoples who are distinguished from those of the north by the olive color of their skin, their jet-black eyes, their dark hair, arched noses, middle height and by their generally rather swarthy features, most of the purported likenesses of Jesus show a very different-looking person.

In fact, in many of the images of Jesus which have fixed themselves on the imagination of the West, he could easily pass for the ideal Aryan type. He is made to look like a king or he appears as a theatrically-proportioned stage or opera figure, a man of dignified bearing and stately height, light-complexioned, slender, of an almost elegant poise. On his shoulders hang thick coils of golden-tinted curls. His hands and feet are finely formed, like those of an aristocrat or a woman. He has the dreamy blue eyes of an idealist or a poet, a pointed or square-cut blond beard, the rosy arch-shaped lips of Adonis, and the straight Greek nose of a Phidian statue.

These and similar pictures of Jesus are fantastic idealizations.

The earliest extant paintings of the Lord, such as those preserved in the Catacomb of St. Calixtus, which dates from:

the fourth century, and in the cemetery of St. Peter and St. Marcellinus in Rome, also of the fourth century, show a man of Semitic features. In these paintings Jesus is a grave and austere person, of commanding presence. The eyes are deep-set and of infinite sadness. They seem to question the beholder with a gentle but powerful insistence. It may well be that these paintings are based on an oral tradition concerning Jesus' physical appearance, which preceded the pattern set by the iconographs who portrayed a god floating on the clouds, surrounded by figures of angels and saints, rather than a human being.

Towards the end of the Middle Ages it was the Crucified One who was portrayed in all the horrors of his agony. The ancient Church had shown a dislike for that monstrous naturalism as well as for the forced idealization. It was the rise of the doctrine of transubstantiation, the transmutation of wine and bread into Jesus' blood and body, which favored and accentuated the glorification of the flesh of Jesus. Rembrandt, who lived amongst the Jews of Amsterdam, saw Jesus as a tall proletarian. Moderns who have sought to portray the human Jesus, rather than the glorified resurrected Christ, never give him an unattractive appearance, but show a man of sorrows, yet with features expressing will power, and of virile contour.

From these more or less reliable data it may be deduced that Jesus was definitely not tall. He was rather frail of form. But he was possessed of a good deal of nervous energy. Sometimes his usually serene dark eyes looked as though he had beheld something great and awful beyond the scope of human intelligence. He grew up amongst a robust peasantry but stood out as one apart, not so much by his physical appearance as by his solitariness and the ideas he enunciated. Those who heard him were surprised that

he, a man without learning, should speak with such authority and wisdom.

He did not have that stately crown of auburn hair, glossy and glowing, to which the ecclesiastical myth-makers have accustomed us. His hair was dark. A black beard fringed a pale face stained by exposure to sun and wind.

Whatever his physiognomy and carriage, there can be no doubt that men felt a strong attraction towards Jesus. He inspired in them a love that did not stop short with his physical disappearance. That love proved stronger than death. He remains, after two thousand years, the fundamental theme of world history. Search the realm of literature and of art, ask politics and philosophy and science and social movements what is the issue at stake, and again and again one meets that Man of Nazareth who has prevented mankind from falling asleep, and who does so more today than ever before.

WHAT JESUS TAUGHT

It was probably at the Oasis of Kadish in the Sinai desert that the covenant between God and certain Semitic tribes known as the B'ne Israel was first established. Upon the advice and pleas and threats of Moses, the tribesmen committed themselves to Yahveh's care. No doubt the past did furnish Moses with some material, but the real origin of the work and thought of that "gentlest amongst the children of man," lay in his sentiment that Yahveh was a Living God, that He had rights over the B'ne Israel, and that He wanted to make them His people. The secret of Moses lies in an inner revelation, which tradition has presented as a divine call issuing from the Burning Bush. That call Moses obeyed.

When Moses made the B'ne Israel abjure their polytheist and animist creeds, Yahveh became the guiding principle of their lives and the focal point of their unity. The blood relationship which they believed to exist amongst them, on the supposition of a common ancestor, was wholly theoretical. Real was the social tie which bound them together in the "sonship" to Yahveh, in the fatherhood of God.

Yahveh was the Chief who presided at every important function of their collective life. He made war and peace. Justice was administered in His name. It was He who distributed oases and grazing grounds amongst the wandering shepherd clans. In the evening He put out His starry sentinels to watch over the camp. In the glacial desert dawn it was His sun that warmed the fretful infants and the aged.

Yahveh is present at the ceremonies marking the passage from childhood to adolescence, at weddings and burials. He is the protector of the orphans, the guarantor of the stranger's security. He fructifies the womb and consoles the widows in their affliction. Not the smallest detail of tribal life escapes His attention. Yahveh, "the Watchman of Israel, slumbereth not, nor sleepeth."

In the desert the day began with Yahveh, and it closed with an invocation of His Holy Name. To those Israelitic tribesmen Yahveh was their all in all, the beginning and the end, their rising and their going to sleep, their eating, their loving, their fighting, their inseparable Companion through life's vicissitudes.

In the hour of alarm the magic of Yahveh's name is hurled as a malediction at the oncoming foe. The Ark of the Covenant, the God's dwelling place—most likely it contained His image—moves into the vanguard with the *gibborim*, the valiant men. "Arise, Yahveh," calls out Moses, "and let thine enemies flee before Thy face!" Turning to the tribesmen, he cries out:—Who is on Yahveh's side? Who?

When Yahveh then returns victorious to the camp there is tumultuous rejoicing. The flutes pipe. The tambourines jingle. The virgins put wreaths of flowers on their heads and dance in His honor. The little children clap

their hands in gladness at the passage of the God's procession.

There, in the desert in that distant historical epoch, Israel already exhibited the characteristic unity of theory and practice which has defined the religious mentality of the Jews throughout the ages, and which set the tone for the message of the great Prophets and of Jesus. There, in the Sinai Peninsula, the direction was given to the activity whose objective is the messianic era, the community of mankind. For every effort to establish a community must start with the intention to establish mutual relationships as close as blood ties, i.e. of mutual affection. The pressure to realize a free society of equals on an ever-widening scale, the ultimate unification of the world in a society of nations, had its origin in that primitive Israelitic culture. "It is not the fact of the common birth," says Dr. MacMurray in his *The Clue to History*, "that makes the unity of the natural family. It is the natural love which tends to develop between members of the family because of their common experience and common interests."

The intention to establish a community, which first manifested itself in the desert, was never broken off in Jewish history. Its continuity exerted decisive influence on Jesus and on his teachings. Both are rooted in Jewish history. It is a matter of historical fact that the social content of Jesus' message is derived from Moses' understanding of the social function of religion. That is why Jesus commanded his followers to love one another. By that command of love he emphasized for his day the element of intention in the natural fact.

But then a revolution takes place in the career of the God. The Jews, under Joshua and others, quit their no-

madic state, filter into the Holy Land and become a sedentary people. This move brings on the greatest crisis in their religious conceptions, a greater crisis than the Babylonian Exile, or even the defeat by Titus in the year 70.

Yahveh is a local God, a desert God, who, in the general view of those distant times, cannot be detached from His habitat. The range of activity and power of all tribal deities was strictly confined to definitely circumscribed sites and regions, to sources, cities, an altar, an oasis. Once he was away from home, a man could not call for help on his own divinity. It was futile and nonsensical. The deity's influence did not extend beyond the confines of his own domain.

But Yahveh does move into Palestine with the B'ne Israel. He breaks with His primitive tradition as a source-god, or a local deity. He becomes the God of a people rather than a spirit inhabiting, or attached to, a site or region. When Yahveh and Israel enter the Holy Land, they appear hand in hand. That the Jews maintained their tribal and national identity in that transition from the desert to the cultivated fields of Canaan, whereas other nomadic clans vanished without leaving a trace in trying to perform the same or a similar feat, they owe to their loyalty to their God. No other people of antiquity came through such a crisis unscathed; many disappeared. The national solidarity of the Jews rested on a spiritual basis which could not be disturbed by the physical power of their enemies.

In Palestine Yahveh has to wage a battle of several centuries with the *baalim*, the local gods of the inhabitants. The Jewish people adopted these gods quite naturally. Yahveh was indeed a great God, but He was not yet the sole God. He was one amongst many.

In Palestine the Jews were in the minority. That minority absorbed the majority in the course of time. But the conquest of Palestine did not come about as a result of the ghastly slaughter of the inhabitants recorded in the Book of Joshua. The Israelitic tribes penetrated quite peacefully into the Holy Land. There was little bloodshed.

The horrifying account of the entry into Palestine, which is interpolated in the Book of Joshua, has no historical basis. It sets a tradition. It is a retroactive wish fulfillment on the part of the strict monotheist school of the prophets which came into ascendancy after the Babylonian Exile. The Yawhist zealots of that school urged the extirpation of the surviving polytheistic practices in order to save the disillusioned remnants of the Jewish people from complete assimilation by offering a new interpretation of the origins of Judaism. That interpretation they inserted into and blended with the text of the sacred books which bear the name of Moses.

There was no slaughter. To the contrary, the incoming Israelites commingled freely with the native Canaanites, and soon shared each other's religious beliefs and practices. The author of *The Wisdom of Solomon*, who knew what really happened at the entry into Palestine, wrote: "The ancient inhabitants of this holy land had incurred Thy wrath, O Yahveh, but Thou didst spare them, for they were human."

The incoming Israelites did not break the Mosaic tradition; they enlarged the basis of the human community.

Not until the eighteenth year of the reign of King Josiah, in 621-620 B.C., long centuries after the entry into Palestine, was the religion of Yahveh finally cleansed from its polytheistic appendices and accretions.

Then the altars of the astral gods were removed from the Temple in Jerusalem; the idols were destroyed; and

the sacred tables in the Valley of Hinnom, on which children were sacrificed to Moloch, were broken up. The ritualistic practice of sacred prostitution "on the heights" was discontinued, while the priests who had functioned in the groves of Astarot were ordered to take up residence in Jerusalem where they officiated in the service of Yahveh alone.

Situated as it is on the highway between Egypt and the northern empires of Assyria and Babylon, Palestine was frequently the scene of military action between these great empires. Incapable of halting these foreign incursions, the Kings of Judah and Israel were forced into alliances, or were made the vassals of one or the other of the colossi contending for the mastery of the world. Sometimes the Babylonians or Chaldeans left the Jewish kingdoms their autonomy, or merely made the rulers swear fealty. But they also faced revolts. Joachim, the first Judean king to break the treaty by refusing to pay tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, perished in the war that followed. His children and thousands of his subjects, the elite of the nation, the army, the artisans and the King's counselors were deported to Babylon.

Revolt followed revolt. But the great national disaster came in 587 B.C. when the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem. For a moment the inhabitants believed themselves saved when an Egyptian army marched to their relief. But the Babylonians either defeated the Egyptians or bought them off, and then resumed the blockade of the City. In 586 B.C. Jerusalem fell, after an atrocious famine had decimated the population. The Temple was burnt. The notables and chief priests were executed and the bulk

of the population sent to join the previous exiles in Babylon. There were a few more outbreaks of resistance, but they were all crushed.

While these dramatic events transpired in the political life of the Jewish nation, a new religious agitation set hearts and minds aflame. The great Prophets arose. These men gave an interpretation of events diametrically at variance with what had been said hitherto in explanation of the national disasters. Their words were not their own. They spoke in the name of Yahveh. They announced that the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel would be destroyed.

It is difficult today to imagine the effect of such an announcement. It revolted national pride. It scandalized the people's faith, and appeared inadmissible to reason. What kind of a national God is He who destroys His own people? Was not the greatness of Yahveh intimately linked with the honor and prosperity of His people? Did God announce His own eclipse?

The answer is: Yes! Yahveh wipes out the past. He ceases to exist as a national God. The Prophets taught the people that Yahveh was infinitely more than a particular tribal God. He was the Judge of all the nations. It was Yahveh's will, and upon His command, that Babylon attacked Judea. Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh and Cyrus, those foreign princes, were also Yahveh's servants. Heaven was Yahveh's throne and the earth His footstool. Some Prophets went so far as to assert that Yahveh was the God of the universe, and that the day would come when all the nations of the earth would acknowledge His supremacy and worship Him.

The Prophets exploded the national framework of the religion of Israel and virtually destroyed it. They pronounced judgments over Israel of unheard-of severity.

But they also spoke with unequalled moral elevation and spiritual greatness on the social, political and religious affairs of the nation.

The national life, say the Prophets, must be reshaped, reorientated, reborn. Yahveh hates sacrifices when justice and love are lacking. God asks purity of life. Yahveh requires nothing else but that man shall practice justice, love goodness and walk humbly with his God. The censure of the Prophets gave to the moral element and the inner life a predominance that no other people of antiquity has known. The words of those Prophets, says James Darmstadter, will live and echo through the ages till the end of time, even if the Jewish people should perish from the earth and leave not a trace of their passage through history.

Some Prophets go so far as to declare all outward forms of religion useless and even criminal. The Prophets, and Jesus, too, are definitely anti-religious in the sense we give to that word. Unlike other reformers they do not seek to restore the past, but they demand a radical transformation of life and religion. They turn their eyes from the golden age which lies in the past, and, by a truly revolutionary *coup de force*, orientate the people's dreams, aspirations and hopes towards the future. They speak of a coming Day of Yahveh, of a new covenant, of rededication, of a new alliance of which the conditions shall not be written in a book, but in everyone's heart, when external authority shall be replaced by inner autonomy. It is the religion of the spirit that comes into being in the Prophets' progressive revelation of Yahveh.

When Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well that the day will come when men will no longer worship in temples, but serve God "in spirit and in truth," he speaks in the prophetic tradition.

Yahveh, say the Prophets, will pour His Spirit on all men. All the dispersed Jews will be reassembled in Zion. Enmities will be forgotten. Israel will attain to an unheard-of prosperity under the scepter of a Davidic king. The Gentiles will ask to be joined in the new covenant. The law of justice, which is the reflection of Yahveh on earth, will illumine and ennoble all human relationships.

Once more, thereafter, the prophetic vision breaks the bounds and horizons of the national religion. It reaches out beyond the barriers of nationality, place and time and brings into view the ultimate ideal: the community of mankind. The whole earth will know peace and well-being. The soil will double its fertility. Ferocious animals will change their nature. No man will die without having filled his days. Old age will be conquered. Disease will not be known. Perhaps even death will be no more. Every man will sit under his own fig tree. In the world community which the Prophets foresee, the knowledge of God will fill the earth with peace and love and justice as the waters cover the bottom of the sea.

This is the consolation of Israel in the disasters that overtake the state and nation. That hope never dies, and sustains them through the ages. Yahveh will arise and build His Kingdom, and by His grace regenerate the human race in a rejuvenated earth.

On the eve of Jesus' appearance, when Israel lay under the bonds of Rome, speculations on the nearness of the Day of Yahveh and the installation of the reign of goodness were in the forefront of Jewish thought, and formed the principal politico-religious preoccupations of his Palestinian contemporaries.

Because of the desolation of Israel, the successive disappointments of national restoration, the vain struggles for

liberation, Jewish nationalism has sometimes sought to narrow the prophetic vision to satisfy its own national and political aspirations. But Christian theology has projected fulfillment of the great messianic dream to the life beyond the grave in order to escape the demands of God's terrestrial Kingdom.

Jesus was a latter-day prophet who restated the demands of the Kingdom of God in unequivocal terms for his time. In that sense he may be regarded a messiah, an announcer and trail blazer of the idea of the community of mankind which is Israel's immense contribution to the sum total of civilization. The announcement of that era of justice and goodness is the Eternal Gospel, the never-dying good tidings. With that message, the substance of which he received from the Prophets, Jesus joins hands across the ages with all the pioneers of the spirit.

Certain exegetes have sought to explain the dismal failure of Jesus' personal mission by charging him with un-Jewish behavior and un-Jewish pronouncements. Had he, so they argue, remained steadfast in the Jewish tradition, loyal to the ancestral ways, scrupulously exact in the observance of the Law and imbued exclusively with Jewish national ideals, he would probably not have come to so inglorious an end, and might even be regarded, in the perspective of history, as one of the Synagogue's noblest sons.

There is little doubt that Jesus was un-Jewish to the extent that an American citizen might be accused of un-Americanism by reactionaries for his opposition to racial, social and economic discrimination, or for his advocacy of peace in the face of hysterical warmongers.

Jesus was certainly in conflict with the status quo of his day. He had no respect for the ostentatious display of piety which he encountered in high places, especially in Jerusalem. He scandalized some traditionalists by saying that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. He sat down to meat with persons not always properly dressed or ritually clean, and conversed on friendly terms with men and women who were not above suspicion of leading sinful lives. No doubt he shocked respectable nationalist sentiment by the inclusion of non-Jews in his concept of the Kingdom of God, for, in spite of the Prophets' universalism, leading Jewish thinkers of his day still treaded gingerly, if at all, in the paths of internationalism. Like many prelates of the modern Christian Church they were internationalist in theory only.

The gospels, which were written and edited at a time when the Jew—especially the Jewish doctor of the Sacred Law—was an enemy, would have us believe that there was an impassable barrier between the Pharisees and Jesus. "This is an error of perspective," says Guignebert. Jesus' faith is the same as that which comes to us in the Psalms and the Prophets. It originated in Pharisean milieus.

Like the Pharisees, Jesus believed in angels and demons. He believed in the resurrection of the dead, and in the speedy advent of the Kingdom of God. He fully shared the nationalist aspirations of his day. Like the Pharisees, who did not discourage messianic speculations, Jesus looked forward with ardent hope for The One That Is To Come. Like the Pharisees he considered no sacrifice too great for the Torah of Yahveh. "Think not," he said, "that I am come to destroy the Torah, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

What he meant by these words is quite evident from

what follows in the Sermon on the Mount* where he makes a comparison of the old teaching with his own. The new teaching, Jesus says in effect, is not new at all. It is the old teaching to be taken in an unconditional, absolute sense. The old teaching has been vitiated, disemboweled. It has become petrified and has been pushed into the background while ceremonial prescriptions have gained the upper hand. Man's religious activities, he says, have been deprived of freedom of movement by incarceration in narrow, legalistic and senseless limitations. Jesus seeks to liberate these activities and restore and elevate their religious character. He emphasizes prophetic Judaism's oneness of intention and practice.

The call of prophetic Judaism is for man to live unconditionally, completely, wholly. He is not merely to acknowledge God on the one hand, and on the other to serve the petty considerations and interests of everyday life. Religion and life are to be co-extensive. Man is to be whole, perfect, absolute at all times and in all things. The service of God is not to achieve a delicate consistency of statement; it is to do as much as one can of God's work. Man must translate into action the God in his heart and mind. That is Jesus' view, and the view of the Prophets.

"Never," says Martin Buber, "has Judaism's solution 'everything or nothing,' been proclaimed so fully and with so tremendous a voice as by Jesus of Nazareth."

In order to eliminate all doubt Jesus adds these words: "Verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all is fulfilled," *i.e.* till the Torah's unconditional demands are fulfilled, and man with all his mind and all his soul and all his strength, with his intention and his practice, by the ab-

* See p. 279, Note 1.

soluteness of his acts purifies and sanctifies the world. "Be ye therefore perfect," says Jesus, as he winds up the Sermon on the Mount, "as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

To Martin Buber, one of the greatest of contemporary Jewish mystics and thinkers, these words of Jesus are a faithful expression of the Jewish heart and mind. That being so, Dr. Buber rightly and courageously rejects the missionary advances of those who counsel Jews to try and make a rapprochement with Christianity. "What is creative in Christianity, is not Christianity, but Judaism," says Dr. Buber. "With that we [Jews] do not need to seek rapprochement. We only need to acknowledge it and to take possession of it, for we carry it in us and cannot lose it. On the other hand, what is not Judaism in Christianity, is not creative, but a mixture of a thousand rites and dogmas. With that—we say it as Jews and as men—we do not wish rapprochement. Of course," he adds, "we can only make such an answer if we conquer the superstitious fears we entertain for Jesus and the Nazarene movement and place him and it where they properly belong: in the spiritual history of Judaism."

Without denying that Yahveh was the Most High, the redoubtable Judge of all the world, and His nature beyond human definition, Jesus shared the Jewish concept of God as a definite person. He was the Maker of their history, their Master and their King, not merely symbolically, but immediately and directly. The recent epoch of Maccabean independence and splendor had made the presence and actions of Yahveh very near and tangible. Perhaps some learned rabbis, in their fear of anthropomorphiz-

ing the Supreme Principle, discussed the question as to which of His intermediaries, His Wisdom, His Word or His Presence, God had used in bringing the victory to Israel. But the simple Jew, Jesus included, and the learned rabbis as well for that matter, felt a boundless gratitude to God who had shown Himself more than a just God, a God of grace and compassion, a real Father of his people.

Jesus did not invent the idea of the fatherhood of God, often said to be the most original aspect of his teachings. He grew up in surroundings of pious simplicity where every just and righteous man was considered and was called the child of God, or the son of God.

Psalms like the 103rd, with its touching: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Yahveh pitieth them that fear him," or the 73rd: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? There is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but Yahveh is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever"; or Isaiah: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto Yahveh, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon," such words, which Jesus knew, are much more Jewish than Christian.

Maître Renan is not quite right when he says that the whole of Jesus' theology could be summed up in the idea of the fatherhood of God. That was and is the theology of all pious Jews whether of the first century or today.

The truth of the matter seems to be that Jesus was done to death for his intense Jewishness. He was one of a large number of popular exhorters and teachers of the first century who chafed under the injustices perpetrated on

his people, and who were seized by the passionate thought of an imminent possibility of revolt. He distinguished himself perhaps by a doctrine which opened up new perspectives for human initiative in advancing the cause of the Kingdom of God. Like other messiahs before and after him, he wanted his contemporaries to take the bull by the horns, so to speak, and not wait for the fulfillment of God's purposes. He tried to force the messianic era by boldly proclaiming its advent. But there was basically nothing un-Jewish in this. At worst it was an error of political judgment. In the year 132 A.D., Rabbi Akiba proclaimed Bar Kochba, the leader of the revolt against Hadrian, the messiah. In our own day we have heard Dr. Isaac Halevi Herzog, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, assert that the establishment of the State of Israel has ushered in the messianic era.

To the most discerning spirits in Israel there never was and there is not today any dualism in the hope of the Jewish fatherland restored, and the greater dream of a universal fatherland—the world community.

On the other hand, certain modern-day Christian theologians, who, for reasons of their own, oppose the establishment of the Jewish State in the Cis-Jordanian part of Palestine, advance as one of their arguments that "true Judaism is not nationalistic." This is the view of certain luminaries of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. American Jews, who have, almost in their entirety, rallied to the support of the Republic of Israel, are warned by these Christian theologians that they are headed in the wrong direction, and that they may become, if relations with their brethren in Israel are not broken off, "a grave problem to Christian democracy in America."

The hidden motive of these Christian theologians in

opposing Jewish nationalism, is the protection and safeguarding of the dogma of the Holy Trinity. They fear instinctively that the position of the dogma would be endangered, if the person of Jesus should appear in too objectively normal and human a coloring, if the identification of the Man of Nazareth with a contemporary Jewish nationalist movement should come to the light of day.

A Jesus sympathetic to and imbued with the same and similar aspirations, hopes, motives, both political and religious, as those of the noblest of his contemporaries, the Pharisees, is not the Christ found in the theological treatises known as the gospels. In them the Jewish people, their leaders, scholars, priests and their national institutions are denounced and vilified as if they were identical with the works of the Evil One.

But there is a deep purpose in this evangelical process, and the end apparently justifies the means: Jesus is not only detached from his people and from his milieu, he is placed in opposition to "the Jews" and to the Jewish people's national aspirations.

"The inner light, which is hidden in our Zionist dream," said David Ben-Gurion, the Prime Minister of the new State of Israel, "is a vision of a liberation with deep human prophetic and messianic content. It is the ideal of the brotherhood of man, his equality and freedom."

This, in the spirit of Jesus, is a proclamation of loyalty to the sense of the Jewish national genius. The two dreams are not antithetical. In the Jewish mind, where the intention and the deed are inseparable, the immediate dream of Zion restored and the distant dream of the Kingdom of God, live side by side and are harmonized. Jews see the one, as through a prism, through, *à travers* the other.

The emergence of the State of Israel in our day has removed a great obstacle from the road to the One World of the Prophets and Jesus.

Paul of Tarsus is the man who must be held responsible for the un-Jewish sentiments of the gospels. It is he who, according to Peter's angry testimony, "twisted and tortured" the sayings of the Lord, *i.e.* the words of Jesus. Paul is the enemy of the Torah, the man who suppressed all Jewish practices, beliefs and ideals which made his own new religion inaccessible and unacceptable to Greeks. It is he, or the school he founded in Antioch, that inserted or caused to be inserted, the un-Jewish and anti-Jewish gestures and utterances of a Greek savior-god in the form of historical episodes into the gospel story which purports to be an account of the life of Jesus. There are two Jesus figures in the New Testament; one entirely Jewish, the actual man of Nazareth; the other is the Christ of the Church, who is the mouthpiece of Paul. Although diametrically at variance with each other, even mutually exclusive, the two, *i.e.*, the Jewish man Jesus and the Greek Christ-myth, are blended into a single figure in the New Testament.

The man Jesus, insofar as he can be disinterred from the mass of legend, myth and dogma under which he lies almost smothered in the New Testament, singularly magnified the prophetic ideal in the true Jewish sense: by his passion for justice, which is the essence and substance of Judaism, by his individual effort, by his endeavor to seek communion with the Infinite, and by his hope for the future.

Not anything Jesus said, but what the Greek philosophers and doctrine makers of the Christian Church a

hundred years after his death managed to put in his mouth, when they concocted a story of his life, made him appear an enemy of Judaism. They created a myth in which Jesus of Nazareth figures as the chief symbol. The tragedy is that the symbol has greatly obscured and virtually annihilated the original.

Investigators have searched long, and are still looking for the precise initiative Jesus took, and the positive actions he accomplished. This much is certain: his condemnation by Pontius Pilate shows him to have been a direct opponent of the established order. He was not crucified because of a divergence of ideas from those of his countrymen. The gospel writers have not been able to erase or suppress Jesus' real actions and utterances entirely. "He seduces the people." "He has caused the people to rise." "He leads the people to perdition," are expressions that occur again and again.

Paul preached the opposite. Paul laid down the principles for an absolute social slavery. There is nothing more abject, un-prophetic and platitudinous than Paul's submission to the mighty of this world: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." It is necessary, according to Paul, to submit, not only because of fear of punishment, but because of principle and of conscience. "Servants," he says in one place, "be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ. . . ." Whoever is a slave, let him remain a slave: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed."

All authority is from God, according to Paul, and becomes inviolable and unassailable.

Paul preached a religion for rich men. He apostrophized the mighty with inoffensive indictments. Where Jesus went the whole way, Paul only sounded audacious. Paul is the formulator of the casuistry of divine right and of the slave-subject. He is the prototype of the priests who have transferred the realization of the Kingdom of God to the nebulous realm of the Greek islands of the blessed, on the other side of the Styx.

When Jesus announced "the good news" of the sure and speedy materialization of the Kingdom of God, he walked in the footsteps of the great Prophets of his people. But when he said that the Kingdom of God "is not of this world," he did not urge the creation of a sphere apart, a sort of ecclesiastical ivory tower where men and women, in times of storm and stress, might retreat in tranquillity to give themselves up to metaphysical speculation and mystical experiences.

Like the Prophets, Jesus stood four-square in the social struggle, for the oppressed against the oppressors, whoever they might be; for the weary and heavy-laden, against the tyrants, both secular and spiritual; for justice and righteousness in human relationships, as against chicanery, hypocrisy and exploitation.

By that phrase about the Kingdom of God not being "of this world," he stated the contrast existing between what is and what should be. The Kingdom of God, he intimated, could not be expected to emerge or blossom from conditions as they were. First conditions had to be changed. The world as constituted at present did not conform to the prophetic ideal.

Jesus' words, as well as his person and activity, must be felt and seen, not in the dead, dehumanized light of theol-

ogy, but against the background of his milieu, the Jewish fatherland of the first century languishing under the yoke of imperial Rome, seething with discontent and with rebellious undercurrents.

Far from being a word of resignation or renunciation, his statement about the Kingdom of God not being "of this world" carried an insistent suggestion to struggle and attack and change fundamentally the prevailing social and political systems. You cannot, he said in effect, build the Kingdom of God if you leave the world in the condition it is. You must bring your influence to bear. Religion and politics are one. You must love the Lord your God with all your mind and with all your soul and with all your strength, and with all your life if need be. The Lord can be loved, and His Kingdom can be advanced, only by the performance of deeds. Against injustice and oppression you must stand forth in God's name, in the name of the highest justice, in the name of the highest freedom.

Jesus assigns to his followers the task, the duty to resolve the contradictions between the reality and the truth, between the world as it is, and the demands of the Kingdom of God.

Blessed are the poor: for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they that suffer: for they shall be consoled.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of God.

You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world!

What do these words of Jesus signify?

They show us that in his conception the Kingdom of God is a complete reversal of conditions and situations as they exist in the kingdom of this world. In the kingdom of the world the rich are blessed, in the Kingdom of God the poor. In the kingdom of the world the self-seekers are blessed, in the Kingdom of God the meek; in the kingdom of the world the happy, in the Kingdom of God the suffering; in the world the satisfied, in the Kingdom of God they that do hunger and thirst for righteousness; in the world the ruthless, in the Kingdom of God the merciful and compassionate; in the world the false, the sly and the schemers, in the Kingdom of God the pure in heart; in the world the martial heroes, in the Kingdom of God the peacemakers; in the world the successful, in the Kingdom of God those that suffer for the truth.

There you have the revolution preached by Jesus!
How can this revolution come about?

Only if individuals, as well as nations, orientate themselves towards God, the Lord and Father. Jesus is concerned not with theology, with meditating upon the essence of God, but with seeking to do God's will. To Jesus as to the Prophets, religion is a passion. It is action. It is deeds and the concrete performance of God's will. Not in religion, but in doing God's will is the Kingdom of God and blessedness. Only by turning away from this world, by turning against this world and against its religion, does man come to God and His Kingdom.

Proof that Jesus did not advocate neutrality or indif-

ference to the ways of "this world," or quietistic contemplation, but active intervention on the part of his followers in contemporary social and political affairs may be drawn from his own words.

"The world" hates you, he warns his friends. It will persecute you and will put you to death. You will be expelled from cities and countries. You will be dragged before courts and be cast into prison. If you keep my words and heed my advice, you will be hounded like wild beasts. You will discover that my message does not bring peace, but the sword and struggle and battle. It will set men against each other, son against father and daughter against mother. It will cut across family and class and national alignments.

You are to overcome "this world," that is, fight it, combat it and finally overthrow it. Yours is a struggle to the bitter end for the sake of God's Kingdom.

All this would make no sense if he had preached absolute detachment from social and political questions. What reason would "the world" have to hate, persecute or kill those who keep themselves strictly apart? The Romans never persecuted the Essenes, who lived in monastic segregation in the confines of the desert eschewing all contact with their contemporaries. But Jesus they crucified because he aimed to change the political order of his country from that of a client-republic to that of an autonomous theocracy.

Jesus was a Jew, and to a Jew there is no dualism in theory and practice. The Jew thinks of theory as determining practice. We of the West find it difficult to relate the two aspects. It is this inability of ours, as John MacMurray remarks, which reveals "the dualistic, non-religious character of the Western mind."

This is why, also, we feel alternately attracted to and repelled by Jesus. We are disturbed in his presence. We do not really like the man as he was, as he comes to us in his words and ideas. It is the Jew in him and his Jewish consciousness that we instinctively resent. Our essentially non-religious mind knows not what to do with him and his religio-political demands. We often talk of doing things "in the spirit of Jesus" because it sounds well and conventional and almost orthodox, but the fruit of our labors shows too often that we entertain sufficient mental reservations to transform the spirit of Jesus into its exact opposite, into our own unconverted mental likeness.

To sum it up: Jesus challenges us, and we hate him for it. Not daring to avow our hatred of him, the Christian West takes out its secret aversion to Jesus on Jesus' kinsmen, the Jews.

Hitler's terror was designed to paganize Europe by extirpating the Jewish consciousness, the essence of Jesus' teaching. Anti-Semitism is often disguised anti-Jesusism.

There is no more solemn hour in humanity's past, writes M. L. Bouquier in his great work on the conflict between ancient civilization and primitive Christianity, than that in which Hellenism and Judaism, under the aegis of the *Pax Romana*, confronted and took each other's measure. "Hellas," says that ardent Hellenist, "proclaimed the harmony of the cosmos and the excellence of human life glorified by knowledge and heroism. Hellas founded a rational civilization. . . . The social problem she solved in the aristocratic manner, reserving a full development of the human personality to a small number, to an elite, even at the price of injustice to the majority.

"The august peace brought by the Roman Empire to a subjugated world, Rome's nationalism, her adminis-

tration and judicial organization, the *Imperium Romanum*, was the guardian power of legality and public order, incarnate in the person of Caesar."

But the Prophets of Israel and Jesus denounced the crying injustice of "this world." The Hebrew Prophets never admitted that the world should be based on "necessary injustices"—of which the first is the resignation of the poor.

The Prophets' conception of the Day of Yahveh, the Day of the Lord, was the dawn of an era that would usher in a complete transformation of the social and political status quo. On that day the humble would be exalted and the mighty cast from their thrones. The destitute and the social outcasts, the disinherited and those wounded in their human dignity, would come into their own by assuming control of their own destiny.

Ernest Renan, who had witnessed the Commune of Paris, once said that the Hebrew Prophets were the socialists and anarchists of their day. The Prophets showed not the least respect or consideration for the might and prominence and splendor of "this world," whether in the form of Egypt, Babylon or imperial Rome. The Jewish and Christian apocalyptic books are full of imprecations against Rome, the city of iniquity, filled with the reign of the Beast, drunk on the blood of the saints, the harlot that fornicates with the kings and the mighty of "this world." Every revolutionary ideology, the Christian origin of every social revolt derives from the Hebrew Prophets' concern for the poor.

The "good tidings" announced by Jesus were addressed to the poor. He told the disciples of the incarcerated John the Baptist to say to him: the blind have their eyes opened, the lame walk and the gospel of the Kingdom of God is preached to the poor. Jesus was a revolutionary

and a rationalist, but not of the sentimental type. Clement of Alexandria reports this word of Jesus: "Ye who will, throw off your chains!" Never in history has mankind been summoned to a greater revolution than by him, a revolution where not only this or that detail among human relationships is to be changed but where the totality of human existence is to be regenerated.

"The Kingdom of God is within you," he told the fishermen and peasants of Galilee. It is within your reach, within your power to make it a reality. It need not be a fairy-tale or a theological lullaby to rock your misery to sleep, if you will but seize the opportunity to shape and control your own destiny by taking it out of the hands of the rulers of "this world." Ye have heard it said, he cried, that in "this world" the kings and princes have authority over men. But in the Kingdom of God it shall not be so.

Jesus said: "Repent ye, and believe these good tidings." The Greek word for "repent ye," is *metanoete*, imperative plural of the verb *metanoein*. It stands for far more than the mystical, rather inane and innocuous* significance given to it in conventional Christian circles.

The *metanoia* of Jesus means conversion in the sense of turning oneself around, turning oneself inside out, spiritually. It means completely reversing one's previous course of action, way of life and mode of thinking. *Metanoia* involves the assumption of new motives and intentions. It means making a decision. In its demand is implied and included the opinion that a man or a nation has not hitherto followed God's commandments, that his or its attitude has not been in conformity with the exigencies and demands of God's Kingdom.

To be converted, to repent, in the sense of Jesus'

* See p. 279, Note 2.

metanoia or repentance, is to take life seriously, to acquire a strong will, to clamp one's teeth and set oneself for action, to have done with all sacro-egoistic attempts to arrive at a personal peace of mind. It means to proceed to deeds, to carry out God's will, to do something in the interest of the advancement of the Kingdom of God. There is nothing saccharine or emotionally weak in Jesus' command. He would like to see his followers do as he did, at the risk and cost of his life, wholly and unreservedly place themselves at God's disposal, subordinating and integrating their personal ambitions into the service of the Kingdom of God.

When Dr. Arthur E. Holt says in *Contemporary Religious Thought*: "... the social systems of Europe have broken up. Inside of them we can see a struggle going on as to what is worthy of supreme devotion. Underneath modern politics is the stuff out of which religion is made," he comes close to the religious consciousness of Jesus. Religion and politics were always inseparable to Jesus and to his prophetic predecessors and followers.

To have "the mind that was in Jesus," to understand his gospel of the Kingdom of God, is to realize the essential and necessary unity of the political elements in Jesus' teaching with his moral prescriptions. Both are Jewish.

FAILURE OF A MISSION

Two of our evangelists, writing under the names of Matthew and Luke, some seventy years after Jesus' death, when Jerusalem has been lying in ruins for a quarter century, tell of an incident which is said to have occurred shortly after the Master's arrival in the Holy City. The incident is commonly known as the "Purification of the Temple." It is often cited by Christian theologians who prefer a virile, determined religious reformer to the "gentle Jesus, meek and mild," of the conventional hymn-book.

Matthew and Luke show Jesus flying into a towering rage as he walks casually one day into the Holy City's financial quarter in the company of his twelve disciples. He fairly bristles with fury at sight of the business done at the moneychangers' booths. He is made to appear so angry that he can scarcely contain himself. He quickly twists some strands of cord into a whip. With this weapon in hand, he pounces upon the bankers and merchants who are of course completely taken by surprise and who scatter in all directions. Jesus lashes out right and left, kicking, stamping, upsetting their tables and stalls.

In the end he is said to have chased down the street the men who were members of one of the City's most esteemed corporations as if they were so many miscreants whom he had caught *flagrante delicto* in some illicit, dishonorable or impious traffic. As Jesus strikes out at the moneychangers, the evangelists make him quote these impressive words from the Book of Isaiah: "My house [God's house, that is] shall be called the house of prayer." To which Jesus is made to add a word from Jeremiah: "But ye have made it a den of thieves!"

While it is, no doubt, instructive and edifying to see the Lord human enough to grow angry on occasion, his wrath in this particular instance is so misplaced and unwarranted as to be almost farcical. When it is taken into consideration that Jesus found himself in a perilous situation during the last week of his life in Jerusalem, it is almost inconceivable that he should have tempted fate, as it were, by committing an act of such senseless and outright provocation as the New Testament describes.

The Temple of Yahveh a den of thieves? But those booths of the moneychangers were not located in the Temple, or even in the quadrangle on which the Temple stood. They were definitely outside the sacred precincts. The separation between the religious and the profane was meticulously enforced in the Holy City, and most rigorously in the Temple's vicinity. The Jews of Jesus' generation were prepared to die rather than permit the defiling effigies of the Roman Emperor to be brought within the City walls. They were not likely to countenance the sordid trafficking which the gospel writers insinuate was carried on inside or near the place which was holier to the Jews than life itself.

The merchants had not turned Yahveh's sanctuary

into a den of thieves. From whom could they steal? They carried on a legitimate, respectable and, from a religious-cultural point of view, highly commendable business in the street appointed for their activity.

At these booths and stalls persons about to enter God's house could obtain ritually *pure* money in exchange for foreign coin, to make their contribution for the upkeep of the national shrine, the cultus and the vast sacerdotal caste. Along the same streets were the stalls and shops of the vendors and hucksters of lambs and pigeons, and of spices, ointments, myrrh, aloe and other ingredients of incense for use in sacrifices and offerings on the altars in the Holy Place. The presence of these merchants in the confines of the Temple precincts, the wares they had for sale, and the coin they offered in exchange for foreign valuta, were absolutely indispensable to the normal and smooth operation of long-established ceremonial laws which Jesus himself, as a loyal Jew, had vowed to observe, and, most of the time, did observe.

More than once he instructed some person whom he had healed of a physical ailment or from mental affliction to go to the priest. This was a procedure prescribed by law. It involved making a small sacrifice of thanksgiving in the Temple.

The wherewithal to make this offering, generally a pair of doves, had to be acquired in the street of the booths outside the sanctuary. Why should Jesus have grown angry, let alone have interfered when he saw men and women making purchases for the performance of religious duties of which he heartily approved?

Moreover, he could not possibly have produced that commotion described by the two evangelists without at the same time bringing a section of the Temple police to the

spot at double-quick march. These bands of beadles or *nethinim*, in the service of the Sadducean and Beothusian parties, were armed with sticks and staves. They were on hand all over the Temple area to see that nothing untoward occurred. They were in fact so officious that the strict Pharisees frequently complained of their unreasonable conduct. A hundred years later, when the Temple as well as these "buds of the priesthood," as the beadles were sometimes called, had long since ceased to exist, the memory of their vigilance and severity remained so vivid in the popular mind, that it became a subject of adverse comment by the compilers of the Talmud.

Had Jesus and his friends upset, or merely threatened to upset, one single table, these *nethinim* would have rushed in, if only to prevent the Roman garrison, that is to say, the military police, quartered in the not too distant Antonia Citadel, or in the abandoned Palace of Herod, from being alerted. The Roman officer of the day would certainly not have hesitated to come over with a detachment of troops to take a hand in quelling an incipient disturbance in the Holy City where the atmosphere around Passover was charged with highly explosive possibilities.

Not that the beadles would have spontaneously protected Jesus and his companions against the Roman soldiers. But they were under standing orders to give the Roman authorities no pretext whatever for intervention in national religious affairs or in events happening within or in close proximity to the national sanctuary.

The presence of the Roman usurpers in the Holy City rankled deeply in every Jewish breast. All that Jerusalem-ites could do about it was gnash their teeth and clench their fists under their cloaks. But let the Romans at least not show themselves inside or in the vicinity of the sacred

precincts. To drive them from that quarter, a hundred thousand men would have risen spontaneously. No power on earth could have then prevented a bloody *mêlée*. One never knew to what disastrous consequences military intervention, even in a minor squabble in the market place, might give rise. The tacit understanding was therefore to afford the Romans no excuse to enter the Temple area.

Had the military nevertheless appeared on the scene, or the swift-footed beadles for that matter, they certainly would have made short shrift of a handful of disturbers of the peace, especially if the troublemakers hailed from Galilee, the province which had produced revolt upon revolt and which was known at that time, as always, to be seething with discontent and rebellious proclivities. Had the police put in an appearance, the date of Calvary might well have been advanced. Or, if Jesus had been killed in the scuffle right then and there, it is probably safe to say that the world would never have heard of him. His fate would have been that of the score of other messianic leaders who arose in the era of the Second Temple and who vanished from the scene without leaving a trace.

The objective circumstances of that week in Jerusalem: the political atmosphere, the watchful attitude of the Roman Procurator, the physical condition of Jesus and the state of mind of his disciples make it impossible, as will shortly become evident, for the incident in the money mart, as described in the gospels, to have occurred. The story belongs elsewhere in the text.

Even so, Jesus' brief sojourn in Jerusalem, which ended in his death by execution, has long been a stumbling block and a mystery to historical critics. Merely wanting

to be in the Holy City to join perfunctorily in the national custom of celebrating Passover in and near the Temple, is not thought to have been his principal motive. As a matter of fact there exists grave and, to be sure, legitimate doubt that the Lord's stay in Jerusalem did coincide with the Passover season at all.

If we take into account that the gospels are our only sources on the turbulent events of those last weeks of Jesus' life, the doubts of the historical critics become understandable and seem not unwarranted. The gospel writers are not primarily interested in relating historical facts. Rather they seek to establish a precedent in history for the institution of the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. With that objective in mind they scruple not to shape, group, arrange, manipulate and even invent facts to suit their purpose.

It should never be overlooked that the gospel story did not produce the Christian Church, but that the Christian Church produced the gospel.

It is an established fact, repeated from the time of the Apostolic Father Papias in the latter part of the second century, to modern times by the most conservative schools of historical criticism, that the actions and utterances of Jesus have not been transmitted in their strict historical order, and that many incidents in his career have been passed over in silence, or embellished and magnified.

Yet the most learned and sober-minded critic of all, the excommunicated Abbé Alfred Loisy, who taught in Paris until a few years ago, avers that if we can be sure of anything at all concerning Jesus, it is the fact that he was crucified in Jerusalem during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. The crucifixion, he maintains, is certain, where all else in the gospels is doubtful and subject to extreme caution.

But if Jesus died in Jerusalem, he must have lived there, too—if only for a brief period of time. And if he lived there, he must have gone there of his own volition. He was not extradited, or brought to the Holy City from Galilee by a Roman military or police escort. Had the Romans caught the leader of a band of seditionists in his native habitat around the Lake of Gennesaret, they would have tried and executed him on the spot. Jesus was, so long as he remained in Galilee, a free man. He came to Jerusalem for a definite purpose.

What was the purpose he had in mind? And what incident, related to that purpose, put him in such a position vis-à-vis the Roman authorities that they sought and brought about his arrest? The gospels do not seem to furnish us with the least hint or clue which would have given Pilate warrant and justification for judicial procedure.

Jesus, we know, was crucified for being a subversive person, a dangerous agitator, a messianic rabble-rouser. What concrete charge did the Romans make against him to enable them to proceed with his arrest? The notion that the tragedy on Golgotha came about solely as the result of one of the Lord's intimate friends betraying him, does not hold water. Judas Iscariot,* if that was the culprit's name, merely disclosed the whereabouts of the party of Galileans on the night of the events in Gethsemane's gardens. Why were the Roman police looking for them in the first place that night?

Some critics see in the "Purification of the Temple" incident sufficient cause for the rigorous measures adopted by Pontius Pilate against the Galilean disturber of the peace. Indeed, if the Purification had actually taken place, if Jesus had really done what the gospel writers say he did

* See p. 280, Note 1.

on that occasion, that violent irruption into the business quarter of the City, would almost certainly have been followed by an investigation. It might not have brought death to the perpetrator, but some punitive action surely would have followed. As it stands, however, nothing further is heard of it.

As we have seen, however, the Purification of the Temple could not have taken place in the way it is described in the New Testament. What then took place? Was that incident perhaps inserted into the narrative as a substitute for something more serious, a real armed attack on the Temple, an abortive *coup d'état*, to lift the messiah Jesus to power and to begin the reconquest of the Holy Land? Was it the start of a campaign to drive out the Roman usurpers from the citadel of the Jewish national religion?

Let us look at the sources and data, both ancient and modern. The gospels frequently, and no doubt quite unwittingly, let through a glimmer of the truth. The older documents, on which they are based, have not been so thoroughly expurgated and cleansed of factual evidence regarding Jesus' deeds and utterances, as to leave us totally in the dark. Besides, fragments of evidence may be found elsewhere, indirect references and loose statements that may be transferred to the place where they belong in the text. Archaeological research of recent years may be of considerable help, and may in the future yet clear up many a dark point. Above all, Dr. Robert Eisler's great book, *The Messiah Jesus*, will prove of invaluable help.

Jesus dreamed of the Kingdom of God* in Galilee. There can be no question about that. The thought of it

* See p. 280, Note 2.

filled his days and nights from his youth onward. He warned his contemporaries again and again that the Kingdom of God was at hand. He urged people on all sides to prepare for its advent, to be ready for its realization, insisting that they set their houses and minds and hearts in order for the materialization of a divine theocratic dispensation in the place of the nefarious regime of the Roman interlopers. The Roman Empire, it was thought, was beginning to show signs of decrepitude. It was growing more and more shaky as the imperial lines of communication extended further and the nationalist spirit amongst the subject peoples rose to an ever higher pitch.

When would the end come, and how? Would the Romans quit on their own account, shorten their lines of empire for security's sake, and in the general process evacuate Palestine? Or would they wait until an upheaval of some sort, brought on perhaps by God's direct intervention, threw them into confusion and collapse? There were many Jews who believed that such an apocalyptic, world-shaking thunderstorm had been brewing for a long time and that it might burst any moment.

Others, the more intense messianists amongst them, held that God runs with the feet of all and works with the hands of all, in other words, that God would not move without man taking the initiative. The Jews considered themselves God's chosen people, co-partners with Yahveh in the plan to liberate and redeem their nation and the world. The carrying into effect of this plan was to begin in Palestine, where else? The elimination of the heathen idolatrous Roman power from God's house was to be the initial objective of any messianist movement. All nationalist Jews were committed to that undertaking. Even if they should not be quite successful at the start, they believed that God Himself would intervene, and carry

the plan to fruition. He would come to the aid of His children. He could not do otherwise. The establishment of His Kingdom could not for long remain a matter of indifference to Him. He was bound to show His might as of old, and scatter His enemies. All the messianist rebels of the time, the dozen or more who rose against Rome in the era of the Second Temple, thought that way about the coming great change.

If they did not think that way, they were the maddest fools of history.

Simon bar Yona, known to us as St. Peter, reasoned in a similar manner. He was one of Jesus' earliest followers. He remained loyal to the Galilean master when others shrugged their shoulders and passed Jesus by, or deserted him. Nothing could shake Peter's devotion to Jesus. "To whom else shall we go, Lord," he said once to Jesus, "thou hast the words of the world to come," *i.e.* the key to the coming era.*

In Peter's opinion they were wasting their time in Galilee. Jesus must carry the message of the coming of the Kingdom of God right into Jerusalem, bring it home to the heart of the nation.

In the course of time, after a great deal of discussion, Jesus was persuaded to accept Peter's point of view. He would go to Jerusalem and test the impact of his ideas on the masses in the capital. He was led to believe that the people of Jerusalem would prove more receptive to his message than were the peasants of Galilee. They would be quicker to sense the meaning of his rallying cry to be prepared for the coming day of the Lord.

At home in the northern province he had, by bitter experience, learned the truth of the old saying that "a

* See p. 281, Note 3.

prophet is not without honor save in his own country." The men of Bethsaida, Capernaum, Cana, Nazareth and other Galilean communities, who had seen him frequently, who had virtually watched him grow up, knew him too well. Familiarity had bred, if not contempt, then at least indifference. His preaching and haranguing sounded presumptuous, brash boasting and in bad taste. They resented the authoritative tone of his discourses in the market places, his prophetic, uncompromising attitude. In their opinion Jesus should, like a shoemaker, have stuck to his last. He should have remained in his father's shop and left preaching to men of learning and experience. Where did he get the knowledge to pose as a teacher and adviser of his fellow citizens? They had no confidence in him.

True, there had been friends. No doubt of that. Many of the common people, it is reported, heard him gladly. They had been especially impressed with his thaumaturgic powers. He did cast out devils and sometimes cured mental ailments. He had a wondrously calming influence on little children afflicted with moon sickness. Unlike other people, he did not spit in contempt and horror on these epileptics. He would pick them up when the spasms came on and their bodies twisted with pain till the eyeballs rolled upward and bubbles of foam appeared on the lips, and hold them in his arms and rock and hush and soothe them until they grew quiet. He could not bring himself to speak harshly to prostitutes, or join in condemning females caught in adultery.

He knew all the vagaries of the human heart. He sympathized with the poor and tried desperately to give them comfort and instill in them hope for a better world. From their side the poor felt his sympathy to be genuine, warming. Jesus did not behave towards them as did the

condescending rich with their self-righteous charity. When he saw the multitudes flocking to hear him, hungry for a word of encouragement, he was innerly moved with compassion, and compared them to sheep without a shepherd. He was distressed for their sake. He felt their sorrows as his very own, and they loved him for it. To the people he was one of theirs.

Yet his principal message, the thing that lay nearest to his heart, lacked both appeal and precision. He advanced no definite program. He was often vague and confused and hesitant. He did not say when and by what means he expected the new era to be ushered in. Frequently he went over the heads of his Galilean hearers. "They understood him not." What the common people wanted of him was something more direct and immediate than counsel to have faith in God and to pray for the coming of the messiah. They wanted to be shown the road to action. They expected more than words, however inspiring and comforting.

How would he be received in Jerusalem? Would he find more understanding hearts there? Jesus himself expressed some doubt on that score. When his friends mentioned the need for going to the Holy City, Jesus grew pensive and showed a growing anxiety. He did not feel himself a match for the erudite doctors and teachers with their plausible speech and well-brushed raiment. His Hebrew was poor, his Aramaic brought smiles to the lips of the cognoscenti. He was afraid that to the letter-perfect scribes he would appear a coarse, almost uncouth Galilean country yokel, a hot-headed but superficial agitator. He was not grounded in the Torah as they were. He realized that he could easily be routed with a clever paradox, an apposite text, or a mocking turn of phrase. He might be

made a laughingstock, the butt of jeers, and be driven out of town under the blows of scoffers. He was extremely self-conscious about his physical appearance. He would certainly not be able to make a commanding impression even if he drew himself up to his full height. What if one of those learned *pilpulists* should ask him in public to define the meaning of the Kingdom of God in precise language, or in terms understandable to the masses? What if he were challenged, as he was bound to be, to pronounce himself on the role of the expected messiah-liberator?

In spite of all that, he felt drawn to Jerusalem as steel is drawn to a magnet, as moth to the flame. There in that city, he knew, lay his task. There were the men and powers that could effectively bring the messianic dream to reality. These men and powers he must activate, even if he perished in the attempt. Just as Jeremiah, who sought to evade the divine call and made all sorts of excuses, in the end denounced the folly of an alliance with Egypt and kept on calling for the maintenance of peace, although he was spat upon as a traitor and a dangerous pacifist fool and was cast into a dungeon, so Jesus felt himself driven by a power stronger than himself to enter the City and fling his messianic message of the coming Kingdom in the faces of the well-satisfied, the compromisers, the timid and the fearful. It was the prophet in him obeying a mysterious, divine urge.

He gravely debated the pros and cons of the journey to Jerusalem with his friends before embarking upon it. He shared the misgivings some entertained and the somber presentiments troubling their minds. He clearly foresaw that once in the city, having begun to speak on the subject that lay nearest his heart, he was bound, sooner or later, to come into conflict, not only with the Romans, but also

with the defenders and beneficiaries of the precariously balanced Judean social order.

He knew he had nothing to fear from the side of the tolerant Pharisaic schools whose teachers were universally loved and respected by the common people and who, in broad outline, shared his own conception of the coming Kingdom. It was from the Pharisees in fact that he had acquired that sacred enthusiasm for God's Kingdom and for the things that are God's.

How would they begin their campaign in Jerusalem? Would he be permitted to speak in the Temple courts, at the schools, in the synagogues? Would he meet with the same experience he had had in Galilee? What would they take him for?

Who did people say he was? he asked his disciples one day.

Then they answered: Some said he was John the Baptist come back to life, others said he was Elijah, still others one of the prophets. . . .

—But you, who do you say I am? interrupted Jesus.

It was then that Simon Peter spoke the words that would prove fatal to the Master.

—Thou art the messiah, the son of the Living God. Thou art he who is destined to liberate the people of Israel.

Jesus was taken aback by Simon Peter's bold language. He begged him not to repeat those words. He forbade him to mention the title again, to tell anybody. But Jesus had suddenly seen himself in a new light. For the moment the light dazzled and disconcerted him. Was he really the messiah? Would he dare to perform the task which that designation involved?

They were already on the road to Jerusalem when the

impetuous Peter made his revealing statement. They were no longer alone, not merely twelve disciples with their inspired teacher. A few hundred men had attached themselves to the party at the invitation of Peter.

Husky men they were, patriots to the core, Zealots, fishers and peasants, *Sicarii*, who hated the reigning tyrants with a deadly hatred and who knew how to wield a knife or a sword when the occasion demanded. Jesus became suddenly aware of the dangerous venture in which Peter had recklessly engaged him. What was he expected to do in Jerusalem? What had Peter planned for him?

Peter reassured Jesus, told him not to lose courage. There was a great multitude waiting for him in Jerusalem. They would have a splendid reception. The friendliness of the Jerusalemites would surpass all expectations. Jesus would ride into the gate on the colt of an ass as the ancient kings of Judah had done when they came to the City to be anointed and to take the scepter in hand. There would be crowds on hand to welcome him who came "in the name of Yahveh." They would sweep him along in a great triumphal demonstration to the Temple, to the palace, to power. The *élan* engendered by his appearance with a message from God would be irresistible. Jesus would not need to do anything himself. Have no fear! Wait and see!

Peter had arranged everything. He was sure of himself and of his Galilean companions. Every one of them was a tested loyalist to the national ideal, a firm believer in his people's destiny, willing to prove his devotion by deeds. They would make that gory beast Pontius Pilate tremble in his shoes. They would chase him back to where he came from, him and his barbarian, heathen mercenaries.

Yahveh would be in the vanguard of the attack as of

old when Moses hurled the Holy Name at Israel's adversaries, when the Ark of the Covenant with the indwelling Presence advanced in the forefront of battle, and its magic destroyed the enemy like a withering fire. If it came to a showdown with the Romans, all Jerusalem would be on the side of the Galileans.

What was Jesus afraid of? Did he not trust Yahveh to attend to His own business? How long could the Eternal One, blessed be He, stand aside when the glory of His Name was at stake? Was it not high time to cleanse the City of God's choice from the abomination of the *goyim*? Judas Maccabee had done it!

But not Judas the Galilean! Jesus remembered the upheaval he had witnessed as a youth when a popular movement swept through Galilee. The Gaulonite had not prevailed, nor Thaddeus after him, nor so many other messianists. They were attacked by the legions, massacred, hewn to pieces, dispersed, crucified. Horrible was their fate! What if Pontius Pilate should resort to similar tactics against Jesus and his band of Galileans?

Ah, but Judas the Galilean's error had been that he raised the banner of resistance in Galilee, in open country. That was the initial mistake he made. It proved to be his undoing. He, Peter, was not so foolish. He would benefit by the experience of others. He would not be caught at a disadvantage. He would occupy the Temple Citadel and challenge the Romans from there. Then he would be able to laugh at them. The Temple fortress was impregnable. The Roman soldiery would break their heads dashing them against those walls, three cubits in width and sixty feet high.

When Jesus, according to Matthew's gospel, "was come into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred." He mounted

the colt of an ass. The crowds shouted *Hosanna*, threw palm branches in his path and even spread out cloaks and other garments as a carpet for him to ride and walk over. And that is all. There the story ends. Nothing more is heard of that triumphal entry which the Christian Church commemorates as Palm Sunday, one week before Easter. Neither the Roman authorities nor the Jewish leaders seemingly pay the least attention to that elaborately staged messianic procession.

It may be, as some critics aver, that the whole affair went off unnoticed in the general noise and tumult of the streets filled with Passover pilgrims and caravans. If so, what does Matthew mean by saying that "all the city was stirred"?

If the demonstration passed unnoticed, the Roman police were strangely negligent, for here was a man from Galilee proclaiming himself "king of peace." He rode on a white donkey as tradition demanded at the installation of a new monarch. The crowds reportedly welcomed him as "a son of David," as a member of the most illustrious and warlike dynasty. The people surely did not mistake the intention of the demonstration. For they spread out their garments, something that was not done when a rabbi or teacher, however renowned or beloved, came into town, but only when a new ruler arrived to occupy the throne. They, moreover, cried *Hosanna*, a messianic *vivat*, meaning as much as: welcome to you, liberator; strength to you; be of good courage and cheer!

Why does Matthew break off the story at this point, and then intimate by hints and covert insinuations that the situation in Jerusalem was tense virtually from the moment of Jesus' arrival?

Scholars have known for a long time (but Christian

ministers have not, of course, told their congregations) that the New Testament story, especially at the point where it has Jesus coming into Jerusalem to carry out his messianic mission, swarms with emendations, rearrangements, additions, erasures and all manner of pious frauds to hide the real circumstances of the hour.

Jesus, or those in charge of his dramatic appearance in Jerusalem, aimed at nothing less than an insurrection. They came for the same purpose as that which had launched, and which would launch subsequent premature messianic movements: to clear out the enemy, to crush the occupying power, to annihilate the foreign troops and to regain national independence. This is the reason Matthew does not continue the story of Jesus' entry in the style and with the trappings of a popular liberator. He suppresses further details because, at the end of his account, he must present Jesus as innocent as a lamb who does not know himself why he is led before Pontius Pilate and why he is crucified.

That innocence of Jesus was to be maintained in order to prepare the unmolested diffusion of the gospels through the Roman Empire. Without that suppression of the truth, the fundamentalist Christian creeds of later days could not have been framed. The truth would have shown Jesus not a god-like being but a human being, too human in fact.

The triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on the colt of an ass, and his hasty retreat prepared the Romans for what was to follow. The incident put them on the alert. The procession was probably broken up by rumors that the garrison was on the way to give battle. Jewish collaborationists, Sadducean aristocrats or their hangers-on, stool pigeons (who have flourished in all ages and countries), realizing the messianic nature of the procession

headed by Jesus and his Galilean bodyguard, no doubt quickly warned the authorities what was afoot. The equally quick mobilization of the legion stationed at the Antonia Citadel, its march in full battle equipment to the gate quarter where the commotion was getting under way, scattered the crowds far and wide. The Jerusalemites knew, by experience, what happened to upstart messianic rebellious movements. They did not wait for the troops to arrive.

Even before Jesus' time, during the reign of Archelaus, messianist Zealots had attempted a coup by marching boldly into the Holy City with the intention of occupying the dominant positions.

In the *Halosis* of Josephus, in reference to that previous messianic revolt, Dr. Robert Eisler reads: "And when the feast of unleavened bread, called Passover, came round, a time when a multitude of sacrifices is offered to God, countless people from all over the country came to the ceremony, and the insurgents stood in secret in the temple and suddenly sprang up, and there was general confusion."

Josephus refers here to the sudden drawing of concealed swords by the Zealots and messianists who had infiltrated amongst the crowds in the Temple.

The messianist group had brought Jesus to Jerusalem intending to repeat what their predecessors had done. But in staging a royal entry, they overreached themselves. They had indeed counted on attracting a large crowd from the start, and expected that crowd to increase to an immense multitude before it reached the Temple area and met the Roman troops, only to sweep these away in an irresistible human avalanche. They had not figured on the spectators and curiosity-seekers and urban partisans melting away at the first sign of trouble. The Romans were

too quick. They were not caught napping. In fact, they were in Jerusalem for the specific purpose of watching for and suppressing any such attempt as the Galileans sought to carry out. The Romans also knew history and the tactics of previous messianist insurrectionaries.

Frustrated in their initial coup, the followers of Jesus, perhaps a few hundred secretly armed men, withdrew to the Mount of Olives, there to reassemble and plan further action. We have seen in modern days, by the action of the Irgun Zwi Leumi against the British forces in Palestine, that Jews are not apt to be discouraged by a superiority in numbers and equipment in the hands of the enemy, nor by the miscarriage of the first moves in a military campaign.

All was not lost with that dispersal of the Jerusalemite crowds. To the contrary, crowds are notoriously fickle and cowardly. One "whiff of grapeshot," said Napoleon, "would have nipped the French Revolution in the bud." It is usually a small minority, but a minority that has made up its mind and that knows what it wants, that manages to reach the goal. The Russian Bolsheviks furnished devastating proof of this assertion in October, 1917, when they overcame the hundred times more powerful reaction.

From the Mount of Olives the messianists planned new action. They were still determined to get into the Temple, to occupy the most strategic positions in the City, and to drive the Roman garrison and Pontius Pilate into the desert. Instead of appearing a defeat, their first encounter gave them new hope and encouragement.

From the Levitical temple guard, says Dr. Eisler, under the command of the *sekan*, or captain of the Temple police, not too much was to be feared. In fact, Jesus' followers expected that in a second attempt, a considerable portion of this religious police force would succumb to

the temptation of the messianic glad tidings of liberation and go over to the Davidic messiah-liberator. The statement made in the Slavonic edition of Josephus, that some of these beadles had greeted Jesus with the shout "Power to the son of David!" makes it probable that the hopes of the Galilean messianists were not illusory.

The chief problem was how to get into the City. The gates were, of course, closely watched after that first messianist onrush. The Roman patrols were on the alert. Every caravan was halted and the pilgrims searched for hidden arms and questioned. The equivalent of Vichyite gendarmes were assisting the Roman police in detecting Galileans by their speech. The top collaborationists were terrified. If the messianists staged a real coup next time, the aristocratic families who had arrived at a *modus vivendi* with the conquerors, who depended on the protection of Pontius Pilate, and who fared well under that protection, feared they would share in the people's wrath.

Indeed, as Matthew remarks, "the City was all stirred" with hope and fear and anticipation. The air was tense with portents of a political upheaval.

Long years after Jesus' death, when the excitement over the abortive messianic coup was almost forgotten and his crucifixion was remembered only by a handful of intimate friends, there was in Jerusalem a group, or conventicle, which devoted itself to the memory of the man who had given his life in the attempt to liberate Israel. Members of this group were sometimes called Nazarenes. They were also known as the "People of the Way." Except for their special devotion to the Galilean Master's

memory, they differed in no way from the average Jew in religious sentiment and practice.

For instance, James the Just, the Lord's own brother, who stood at the head of the group because he could recall so many details of Jesus' life, was particularly assiduous in his attendance at the Temple. He could be seen there daily, bowed in prayer, profoundly absorbed in meditation. He was pointed out to visitors as a curiosity, as one of the last remaining participants in that hectic affair in which his brother had been the chief character.

As has already been said, this James, by reason of his mirth-provoking appearance and diminutive size, was frequently the object of raillery and banter. He invited smiles and laughter, unintentionally of course. One of the questions that people asked to provoke him was this: "Where is the Gate of Jesus? How did Jesus manage to get into the Temple?" The Slavonic version of Josephus, which was recovered only in the year 1893 by Dr. N. Bonwetsch and subsequently made available to the public by Dr. Robert Eisler in his monumental work entitled *The Messiah Jesus*, records these incidents with James the Just in the Temple courts.

"Where is the Gate of Jesus? How did the companions of Jesus get into the Temple?" The questions seem to imply that Jesus or some of his Zealot companions did manage to enter the Temple otherwise than as a pilgrim to pray and worship. James would reply to the second question by saying: "Jesus is with God the Father." But the first question, about the gate, seems to have thrown him into uncontrollable fury, to the great amusement of the questioners.

How did the band of Galilean Zealots get into the Temple? How did the army of modern Israel in 1949

defeat the ten times superior Egyptian forces which had invaded the Negeb? By using a forgotten Roman road through the desert and attacking the surprised enemy from the rear. By a similar stratagem King David in ancient days captured the Citadel of Jerusalem from the Jebusites.

David had been king for seven years in Hebron, but Jerusalem was still in the hands of the original Canaanite inhabitants of the Holy Land. Neither Joshua, the successor of Moses, nor any of the Israelitic tribal chiefs after him, had ever been able to expel the Jebusites from their mighty citadel on Mount Moriah. David took the fortress and drove out the Jebusites. David's son Solomon built the first Temple of Yahveh on the conquered site and called the hill Mount Zion.

The Second Book of Samuel (5:7 and 8) tells how David accomplished the feat which had taxed the ingenuity and martial prowess of successive generations of Jewish warriors.

"And the King and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither" (meaning that the Citadel of Jerusalem was so impregnable a fortress that even the blind and the lame could keep David out).

Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion—*through the watercourse.*

He must have entered the aqueduct at the Tower of Siloam where the sources were, and proceeded underground until he was right in the heart of the Jebusite fortress.

Of that Tower of Siloam the New Testament has something to tell us. It says that in the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate it fell on those who had captured it. In the same context mention is made of Pilate having mingled the blood of the Galilean insurrectionaries with their sacrifices in the Temple.

In 1913-1914, Major Raymond Weill, of the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* of Paris, on an archaeological expedition in the Holy Land for the Baron Edmond de Rothschild Foundation, found and excavated the remnants of the Tower of Siloam, and laid bare the watercourse to a point where the lower chambers of the Temple had once been located. The watercourse was found to terminate precisely beneath a natural fissure in the rocks. The fissure pointed upwards and ran to a spot in the present gardens surrounding the Mosque of Omar where once stood the Temple of Yahveh. In other words, Major Weill uncovered and traced the subterranean road taken by King David in his conquest of the Jebusite Citadel a thousand years before the Christian era.

But Major Weill did more. By uncovering that underground passage and the fissure in the rocks, which can be seen today by anyone willing to take the trouble, the French scientist solved the riddle of the cause of Jesus' death. For it was along that subterranean route that the Galilean Master's rebel companions entered the Temple, not merely to upset a few tables and booths of money-changers, but to seize the fortress and to hold it for Yahveh and His Kingdom.

I do not think Jesus approved of the attack which his Galilean followers launched upon the Temple. It is almost

certain that he did not accompany his impetuous Zealot friends on that foolhardy undertaking, although, it must be admitted, there exist documents which set forth that Jesus usurped the priestly function and made a sacrifice on the golden altar in the course of the brief occupation of the Temple by the Galileans.

What happened is most likely this: the band of Galilean messianists, as we have seen, was rebuffed in its initial attempt to march boldly into the Temple with Jesus riding at their head in the traditional trappings of a king on his way to assume the royal power. They withdrew to the Mount of Olives to hold a council of war and to plan further action. Even Josephus the historian, who is entirely uninfluenced by any idealizing and apologetic aims,* confidently assumes that Jesus had most strictly enjoined his followers to avoid bloodshed.

But the Zealots, who had attached themselves to Jesus' following, and who predominated in the crowd that marched on Jerusalem with him, paid no attention to Jesus' advice. They were, in the phrase of that day, standing "in the gates of Jerusalem." They were in sight of their objective. They had brought their swords. They were going to use their blades and not sheathe them again until they were victorious. They laughed at Jesus' scruples. Did he think that the theocracy could be restored by sermons, by sweet reasonableness, by urging the people to repent and pray and be patient? Had not that method been tried for ever so long? What results had been attained from that? If Jesus thought that piety and prayer could ever sweep the Romans out, and put the arrogant Sadducean collaborationists in their place, he was a naive fool. They, the hot-headed Zealot fanatics, would show him

* In the Slavonic version.

how the thing was to be done. In a few days they would come to fetch him and bring him into Jerusalem and install him on the throne of David. Then there would be no more Roman legionaries or Pontius Pilates to bar the way. Wait and see! The Zealots had a plan!

Having explored the neighborhood, the graves and tombs in the Valley of Kidron, and hidden arms in the caves of the Mount of Olives, Zealot scouts examined the City walls for a spot where they might be scaled. No doubt they questioned citizens living in the vicinity of the walls, both outside and inside the City, as to their sentiments with regard to a messianic restoration. They were looking for reliable allies, men who would stand up and fight in a pinch.

When they found the walls unassailable, the Roman sentries doubled everywhere, the gates barred, traffic in and out of the City rigorously controlled, the lookout posts on the walls manned day and night, the Zealots hit upon the idea of trying to enter by way of the water-course. It lay underground. It was not watched. They probably learned of its existence from partisans in Jerusalem itself. For we may be sure that, in spite of official precautions, there was a daily exchange of information between messianist groups inside Jerusalem and the Zealots outside.

First they explored the tunnels and the fissure in the rocks. They found that the fissure was used to bring water from the aqueduct into a chamber located on the side of the court of priests. In that chamber stood a huge basin where the officiating clergy performed its ablutions. The door from the fissure to the ablution chamber was open in the daytime. At night it was bolted, but it could easily be forced. Nobody paid any particular attention to it.

While the deliberations went forward and the conspiracy ripened, Jesus undoubtedly withdrew from the camp of the Zealots to stay with friends in the not too distant hamlet of Bethany. He may well have visited the house of Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. These devoted friends were aghast at the account he gave them of the unsuccessful messianic entry and of the grave risk he had run in allowing himself to be mixed up in that political brawl. They, and others come from Jerusalem to meet the Master, counseled him, the New Testament informs us, to return to Galilee, or, at least, to stay away from Jerusalem, and have no further dealings with the Zealot fanatics.

Jesus must have answered that he desired no battle with the Romans. He had had no intimation that his followers intended violence. He was amazed when the affair at the City gate took the turn it did. He had been led to expect something entirely different. What he planned on entering Jerusalem was not a messianic war. He wanted to teach and talk with the people, to urge them to prepare themselves for the inevitable Day of the Lord. That day could not dawn, in his estimation, if men's hearts were not ready for it. The Kingdom of God could not come by ungodly means. The means must correspond with the goal. One could not expect to serve Yahveh and Mammon at the same time. If the peoples first learned to love Yahveh their God with all their mind and all their soul and all their strength, God Himself would lead them in the paths of freedom and happiness. They must first seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. . . .

When the messengers came to Jesus, they did not come to fetch him for a second and more successful triumphal entry.

They told him that a party of some two hundred Galileans had entered the watercourse one morning and had climbed up the rocky wall in the fissure. There they had waited till the officiating group of the priesthood performed its ritual ablutions prior to offering the morning sacrifice. They were hoping that upon entering the basement chamber, a number of the priests and Levites would perhaps join the undertaking and lead them to those secret chambers stocked with arms, the existence of which Pilate suspected, but on which he had never been able to lay hands.

Shortly after dawn, the Galileans forced the door into the basement chamber. Quick as lightning they ran upstairs, emerging just at the moment when the sacrifice was to begin in the court where the altars stood. There was an instant of bewilderment among the priests. Some fled in panic. The service was interrupted. But the Galileans reassured the sacerdotal group that they intended no harm to any son of Israel. The sacrifice was to go on. In fact an extra bullock was to be offered as a thanksgiving to God for having crowned the enterprise with glorious success.

The invaders had no time for a long discussion with the priests and Levites. They ran off to secure the salient strong points in the Temple area, such as the towers and the gates. "At each of the places seized by the rebels," Dr. Eisler remarks,* "one of the insurgents must have been in command, and these two leaders are doubtless the two ['evildoers'] crucified a few days later on the right and left of Jesus." For the New Testament says specifically

* Op. cit., p. 510.

that they were "under the same condemnation," *i.e.* under the same sentence for the same crime as the Galilean carpenter. Of these one cries to Jesus: "Art thou not the Messiah? Save thyself and us." "Very natural words," comments Dr. Eisler, "if he had taken part in the undertaking of Jesus which had ended so disastrously, but hardly explainable if, according to the usual view, the speaker was a highwayman without the remotest connection with Jesus and whom the messiah had not the least reason to save."

The Galileans were searching for the arms depots in the vast subterranean labyrinth of the Temple when the alarm was sounded. Pilate's cohorts were entering the gates of the sanctuary. Someone must have warned the Procurator of what was happening. The crowds of worshipers in the outer courts could not have failed to notice that the service had been interrupted, that strange men in Galilean peasant garb were running amongst the white-robed priests, and that there was an unusual bustle and agitation in the lower chambers.

Whatever it was that brought the legionaries to the scene, the Galileans were soon trapped. A bitter fight developed in the underground passages and chambers. The Galileans fought like lions. They counterattacked again and again. But Pilate, who was probably present himself, ordered up reinforcements. In a few hours he had the better of the rebel forces.

Instead of taking his prisoners outside the sacred precincts to have them crucified, the Procurator commanded his men to lead the Galilean captives upstairs. There they were slaughtered, and by order of Pilate,

their blood, as the New Testament says, mingled with the blood of the bullock they had asked the priest to immolate. Only the leaders were led away to be crucified a few days later.

Still, that was not the end of the sanguinary affair. Some of the Zealots had managed to get back into the fissure and into the watercourse. They emerged at the other end of the tunnel, inside the Tower of Siloam. There they overpowered the sentinels and established themselves.

As soon as Pilate learned that the Tower of Siloam was in the hands of the insurrectionaries, he brought up the battering rams to attack the place. He could not afford to do otherwise. Anyone holding the Tower of Siloam dominated half the City, for it was one of the chief structures in the defense system of Jerusalem.

In view of the comparative weakness of the Roman garrison in Palestine, the position of Pilate would be extremely serious if the country, roused by the bands of pilgrims streaming in and out of Jerusalem, should join in the revolt. Passover was not far away. Men were even then making ready all over the land to go on the annual pilgrimage. Jerusalem would be overrun by the crowds in a short time. What if the crowds should take up the Galileans' cause and liberate them from the Tower?

True, Pilate still held the Antonia Citadel and the Palace of Herod, but the troops stationed at these two fortified places were for the most part Samaritan auxiliaries. The Samaritans bore a deep grudge against the Romans. Pilate did not trust the Samaritans. Moreover, they formed a troop of cavalry which was of little use in street fighting, or in storming that formidable structure of Siloam against which Titus was to hurl his best legions in vain some forty years later.

The Siloam bastion was battered with the huge wooden rams. Against these tactics the Galileans, who were equipped only with swords, could offer no defense. After a few days the walls collapsed, burying the Zealots under the ruins.

This was the message Jesus received from his Galilean friends who took part in the coup. The attempt had failed. Jesus had been right: "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord," shall it come to pass. God's Kingdom could not be built by brother killing brother. Most of the surviving Zealots were glad enough to go back to Galilee or escape to the Judean hills.

Jesus did not feel himself involved. He had not taken part in the attempt on the City. Except for the tumult at the gate when he first arrived, and to which he had made a quick end by withdrawing indignantly, he had had no share in the messianic revolt. Passover was coming on. He would not return to Galilee till the Feast was over. With a handful of friends he would attend the services in the Temple. Nobody could object to that. Every Jew had a right to be in Jerusalem on the holy day and to eat the traditional lamb with his friends.

With the massacre in the Temple and at the Tower of Siloam the insurrection might be regarded as quelled, though the real author of the sedition was still at large. That author was Jesus.

Jesus had been the central personage, the animating spirit of that messianic revolt which now lay crushed and shattered. Back in Galilee it was he who had spoken of installing the Kingdom of God in Jerusalem. He had appealed to the common people, and warned them that the time was at hand, that the "Day of the Lord" was about

to dawn, and the Kingdom to become manifest. He had urged his countrymen to be ready for the great historical change when God, according to the ancient prophecies, would reassert His right over the people of Israel and confound its enemies.

A group of Zealots and other extreme nationalists and messianists had rallied to his side and accepted his leadership. They differed with him on the interpretation of how the Kingdom was to be initiated. They did not make the means to be employed a subject of contention with Jesus. They were for the cause. That was all that mattered. They were determined not to let an opportunity slip to translate the age-old dream into reality. They took advantage of the persuasive powers of "one who spoke with authority," to attract more partisans and auxiliaries to their movement. They used Jesus for their own ends, and he, largely in the dark as to their specific intentions, but in warm sympathy with their general aims, allowed himself to be used.

Somewhat reluctantly and foolishly he had ridden at the head of the messianic procession into Jerusalem. Only when that demonstration was broken up and the real intentions of the movement's leaders were disclosed, were Jesus' eyes opened to the political and military character of the partisans' intended *coup d'état*.

Jesus did not openly break with the Galilean insurrectionaries after that. He dissociated himself from their intrigue and from the violence of their conspiracy. He still believed in the necessity of making a beginning toward the Kingdom, but he left his Galilean partisans to their own devices, retaining in his company only the Twelve who had been his early associates.

He refused to join in the plan to make a second and more determined attempt to seize the Temple and fortifi-

cations. He would have nothing to do with tactics that were diametrically opposed to the means he had in mind to usher in the Kingdom's coming. Nevertheless, he remained interested in the welfare of the men he had led from Galilee to Jerusalem. He inquired daily what they were doing and what they planned. When the news arrived of the armed incursion through the watercourse and the capture of the Tower of Siloam and its subsequent destruction, the matter came as a surprise and disappointment to Jesus. He disapproved of the action of the Zealots, but he did not condemn them. He lamented their cruel fate.

Had Pilate known of Jesus' role in the march on Jerusalem, he would have instituted a search for him immediately. But Pilate thought the rebellion quelled and the surviving insurgents dispersed in panic.

Pilate was not aware of Jesus' existence. And Jesus was not aware of having done any wrong. He minimized the danger he ran in remaining in close proximity to the City. Why should he flee when he was not conscious of having committed any wrong?

The City was quiet. The danger was over. The troops were back in the Antonia Citadel. Workmen were repairing the damage suffered by the Tower of Siloam. Pilate felt reassured now that he had nipped a serious revolt in the bud. The precautionary measures at the gates were relaxed. Passover was coming on. Caravans with pilgrims were beginning to arrive. Jesus, still camping on the Mount of Olives, or residing at Bethany with Martha and Mary, began to re-enter the City with a few of his intimate companions to attend the services in the Temple.

On one of these brief visits may have occurred the incident known as the "Purification of the Temple." Jesus' religious sensibilities may have been aroused, his temper

might have flared up at sight of the trafficking in animals and money in such close proximity to the Holy Place. He may have stopped to reprimand the dealers and hucksters. He may have spoken vehemently against their money-grubbing spirit. But he committed no act of violence such as the gospels attribute to him.

By speaking to the merchants, however, he did inadvertently betray himself and his presence in Jerusalem. It is recorded in the New Testament that "from that time onward," certain persons conspired to eliminate him.

Who did that Galilean rustic think he was, to interfere in legitimate business? What was he up to? Somebody should warn the Procurator that a few of those Galilean agitators who had recently been beaten, were still around and that Jesus of Nazareth was one of them.

Jesus went his way unconcerned for a few days longer. But Pilate was notified. The Procurator took no chances.



PART 2

WHY JESUS DIED

THE ARREST

Evening has come to Jerusalem. The last glimmering fragments of day are vanishing. The night wind from the East, after blowing across an endless expanse of desert land, meets its first obstacle in the walls of the Holy City. It is the last time that Jesus will see the Judean sun make its swift descent towards the sea. The fateful crisis is at hand. In the coming night and on the morrow will be enacted the last phase of that somber drama which, more than any other event, has influenced the course of human affairs through two millennia. The Master has less than twenty-four hours to live. Tomorrow at this hour the life of Jesus will have come to an end. The building of the Christ-myth will start a few days later.

Already the shadows of night have made their appearance. The speed with which they urge themselves over the housetops and through the streets produces a vague sense of uneasiness. There is an eerie hush and strain in the air. The fiery red disc is actually seen to drop towards the horizon. A tomblike chill falls from the sky. The brief afterglow tints the vault overhead with a spectral purple.

But this color, too, fades in the twinkling of an eye. Darkness gains the upper hand with the abruptness of a clap of thunder. Then the weird spell is broken. A softer breeze whispers in the young grass. The hills begin their nocturnal song. All at once the stars are out. They hang over Jerusalem like clusters of luminous grapes almost within reach of a man's hand.

It is in this hour that Jesus and his companions walk quickly through the winding alleys of the bazaar on their way to the Lower City where they intend to take the evening meal in a friendly hostelry the proprietor of which is probably a fellow Galilean. If the fourth evangelist is right, and this is the eve of Passover, they will eat the paschal lamb which the innkeeper has roasted for them that morning.

They are dressed like most poor Palestinian peasants: a coarse, full-length linen garment with sleeves and a tunic underneath, a leather girdle around their loins, sandals on their feet, tied with thin leather straps. On their heads they wear a piece of light cotton or linen, the so-called *cuffieh*, which the Bedouins wear to this day. It is held in place by a circular strand of dyed hemp. Galilean rustics of Jesus' kind did not, one may be certain, affect the extravagant styles set by the young bloods of the City—those flowing silken robes and broadbrimmed hats with colored tassels which, so Josephus reports, exasperated the Roman officers.

Country people like to carry a stick or staff when on the march. No doubt Jesus and some of his friends carried one. As was the general custom they wore their hair long and had full beards. As a Nazarite, that is to say, as one pledged never to allow his head and face to be touched by shears or razor, Jesus certainly conformed to this prescription.

He and his companions are just another group of pilgrims in the crowded city and attract no particular attention. The Master is without the aureole which Leonardo da Vinci and Veronese will paint around his head fifteen centuries later. He is also without the famous seamless robe which the evangelists will pick up from a text in the Old Testament when in years to come they write of his life and death.

There must have been many similar groups of pilgrims with some *nabi* or inspired rabbi at their head wandering about Jerusalem's streets in the Passover season. Josephus mentions, with pardonable exaggeration, that the number of transients in the Holy City on the occasion of the annual festivals often ran into the millions.

Surmising that the Procurator's watchfulness has relaxed somewhat since the savage butchery in the Temple court and that he feels satisfied that no more untoward incident will occur at least during the present paschal season, Jesus and his friends have begun to slip in and out of Jerusalem again. They feel safe from detection in the ebb and flow of the vast multitude.

That afternoon they have probably spent in the Temple precincts, looking in perhaps at one or more of the schools, to listen to the doctors expound or discuss a portion of the sacred lore. Or they might have strolled and conversed in the marble-columned galleries which ran like an enormous close along the four sides of the quadrangle on Mount Zion in the center of which stood the Temple of Yahveh.

Those broad porticoes with their finely carved ceilings of cedarwood provided a pleasant refuge from the midday heat for thousands of visitors and Jerusalemites. They were not holy ground in the strict sense of the word, although they formed part of the area in which the Temple police

maintained order and decorum. Non-Jews were readily admitted there, but warnings were posted at frequent intervals in Latin and Greek that under no circumstances might Gentiles pass beyond by ascending the broad stairways leading to the upper terraces, on the highest of which stood the sanctuary proper.

At the time of Jesus' visit to Jerusalem the building, or rather the restoration begun by Herod the Great, had virtually been completed. The Herodian Temple was much more splendid and more richly adorned than the fabulous first House of God erected by Solomon. The terraced garden had been greatly extended by filling up the ravines to the north. A bridge led from the royal palace to the Temple enclosure. Without moving from his quarters, the Roman Governor could watch what went on in the heart and nerve-center of the Jewish national life. True, eighteen thousand workers were still employed on the outlying buildings and walls, but the main structure was completed. Jesus saw the Temple of Yahveh as it was approaching the full glory it possessed on the eve of its destruction in the year 70.

It is not unlikely that the Galilean exhorter gathered a small group of listeners around him that afternoon in the corner of one of those galleries, or that he sat under a cypress tree in the garden talking on that subject which was ever of burning actuality to him, as it was to most of his Jewish contemporaries: the need of a radical change of mind and intention on the part of his countrymen, in preparation for instituting the Kingdom of God. Other teachers sat nearby or strolled up and down with their disciples or with visiting doctors from Babylon, Egypt or the cities of Asia Minor, for the scholarly elite of the Jewish world was concentrated in Jerusalem during the holy week.

In a certain sense those porticoes or galleries around the Temple grounds were to the men of Jerusalem, and to all Jews, whether they resided in Palestine or outside, what the Acropolis at Athens was to the Greeks. Here men came together to be instructed, to exchange views on the ultimate questions of God and the universe, to hear news, to discuss events at home and abroad, to talk politics, to plan and to argue on every conceivable subject under the sun. A Jew of the first century who did not frequent that *Forum Judaicum* was like a Parisian or New Yorker who does not read a newspaper.

Before starting back to their *khan* or hostelry, Jesus and his companions have most likely listened to the trumpet blasts announcing the advent of Passover, and heard that day's double choir of Levites chant the prayers while the priests made the evening sacrifice.

Now that they are in the streets, they appear nervous and distraught. Doors close softly upon their passage in the narrow *soubks* of the bazaar. Silhouetted figures lean over the parapets of the housetops to watch the belated pedestrians. In every square and open space of the City stand tents filled with pilgrims whose ritual meat has been roasted on the charcoal fires outside.

Merchants are putting up shutters and fastening the bolts on their shops. Lamps are being lit in the houses. The daytime's babel of voices has died down to a hushed murmur which is occasionally punctuated by the sharp voice of a mother calling her children. Men's padding footsteps are now audible on the hard soil and flagstones of the streets. The Galileans walk rapidly and glance around from time to time to see if they are being followed.

Can it be that they have received intelligence of a decision on the part of the Procurator to take their beloved

Master stealthily into custody? Has someone informed Pilate that the leader of the Galilean rebels is still at large, and that he is in and out of Jerusalem virtually every day? Or was there perhaps a friend, or a casual Galilean sympathizer from Capernaum or Bethsaida who in passing whispered a word of warning about the Roman soldiery being alerted for that very night? The Galileans, who are still relative newcomers to Jerusalem, and therefore unfamiliar with the Government's methods, may well have learned for the first time that afternoon about Pontius Pilate's habit of carrying out sudden *razzias*, general round-ups of suspected persons in the crowded inns of the Lower City in the hope of catching in his dragnet some of the thousands of Galilean Zealots and other direct actionists, all sworn enemies of the Roman power, who he knows have slipped into the City.

What is it that disturbs Jesus and his friends so deeply that they show such inordinate haste and that, just arrived at their hostelry, they hurriedly prepare to leave again almost at once?

The meal stands ready on the low table in the center of the room. The winecups are filled. The roasted lamb, heavily spiced, and the vinegar sauce spread a fragrant, appetizing odor through the house. The bitter herbs on the table are a reminder of the abject slavery of the fathers in Egypt. The dish of cooked dates mixed with figs, almonds, raisins and spices is the color of the reddish clay of the Nile valley from which their ancestors had to make bricks for Pharaoh. The Galileans leave without tasting the food. They wrap some *matzot* (unleavened bread) in a cloth as if about to start on a long journey.

Something obviously has gone wrong. There is danger in the air. They will find themselves in a blind alley until

midnight. Somehow or other they are aware that the police are on their trail. Their only hope of escape lies in getting out of the City, as they did last night and the night before.

But if the police are after them, the gates may be watched. The roads to Bethany and to the Mount of Olives may be barred. How leave the City without being observed? They are in a sore predicament, isolated, cut off from all possible help. The patrol may knock at the door any minute. The house may be surrounded now. How can they communicate with the scattered sympathizers in the City and notify them of the Master's plight? The Temple courts are now closed; the bazaar or business quarter is wholly deserted. Whatever friends happened to be about the Master in the galleries a few hours earlier, have dispersed far and wide, to their homes in the slums, to the inns, to the hills outside.

Nobody has thought of taking precautions, of arranging a signal, for instance, to collect a few resolute men in such an emergency as now clearly confronts them. Apparently nobody has anticipated any trouble.

These men are the last adherents of the messianic movement of which Jesus is the center and, unwittingly, the animator. Amongst them are dreamers, ardent patriots, poverty-stricken peasants, and still a few Galilean hot-heads. Since the debacle of a few weeks ago, they have no definite program, no organization, no discipline. What binds them together is their passion for the ideal of the Kingdom of God and the Master's faith that God, in the last moment, when all seems lost, will yet intervene.

As to Jesus himself, he has not been able to make up his mind. He is beset by doubts and hesitations. Should he flee? Will he face the issue which Pilate is forcing on him? He cannot come to a decision.

The disciples are in no less a quandary. Even if some men of valor could still be mustered, if some Galilean patriots could be summoned from the slum quarters—where history has time and again found the most intrepid fighters—is it certain, is it likely that Jesus will permit them to make a stand for him, to face the enemy sword, cudgel or knife in hand? Will he allow violence to be set against violence now that the issue is rapidly coming to a head, and his own person is in immediate danger of arrest and perhaps worse?

No doubt the most impetuous amongst his followers urge him to fight back if need be, to send out an alarm, to make an attempt to rouse the mass of proletarians in the City and boldly proclaim the establishment of God's reign. Others in the company are fearful. They counsel flight, or rather retreat to the gardens outside the City to deliberate, and perhaps to assemble for a general exodus of all messianists to the Transjordanian desert. All know the danger is great, and that it is now or never.

Why did the Master insist on re-entering Jerusalem? It is all so different from what the disciples imagined when they were still in Galilee. Those foreign soldiers quartered in the Antonia Citadel! How formidably competent they look! How foolish was the affair of the watercourse! What chance did the partisans have against these trained combat troops in full armor?

To see the cohorts marching through the streets in solid mass, in serried ranks, thousands of clean-shaven, athletic young men, Germans, Gauls, Dacians, Nervii, all of them killers for the joy of it, stepping in perfect unison, their helmets and breastplates gleaming in the sun, clashing their short swords suddenly in one single deafening stroke on their shields at the trumpets' blast in Caesar's honor—how terrifying a picture of the Roman power, and how

different from what was naively imagined around the charcoal fires in the fishers' huts by the Sea of Galilee! How childish now sounds the echo of the bold language and bragging of the rural patriots who talked as if but one determined, concerted effort would rid Palestine of the foreign usurper forever.

Did Jesus still expect a miracle? Did he think those Roman legionaries would vanish like Sennacherib's armies of yore, in the secrecy of the night? Why else did he deliberately run into this trouble? Why didn't he go back to Galilee after the *coup de main* in the Temple? In Galilee he would have been relatively safe. There he could easily decamp from one village, if opposition or hostility developed, and flee to the next hamlet, or board ship and cross the lake, and escape into the cities of Decapolis where the population speaks Greek and does not understand him, and hence would not molest him.

In Galilee these men and their beloved Master, calm, bright and meditative, without many words perhaps, but those true and grave, have often walked in the cool of evening on the grassy slopes, under cypress and chestnut trees. Now here in Jerusalem words fail them. They are disconcerted. There is no escape. They are trapped.

In spite of efforts to obscure the truth, some elements of the reality always and again break through in the New Testament's narrative. Whoever reads with serene loyalty cannot fail to become aware of a hundred and one little details that testify to the essential humanity of the personage whose steps are being traced. True, there is but the faintest echo of Jesus' own words, but that echo reinforces the feeling that a real man, a creature of flesh and blood, passed through the Galilee and Jerusalem of the first century.

Out of the mass of theological trappings and phan-

toms, the layer of creedal decorations, the golden and sometimes blinding legends fashioned by the schoolmen, there emerges, especially in the accounts of the Passover week, a man who is at his wits' end, who simply does not know what to do next.

Jesus' efforts to make his hearers understand the intent and meaning of his message have failed. There has been no response in Jerusalem. The crowds have not surged after him to sweep him into power with irresistible *élan*. Not a single person of standing or authority or learning has recognized in him a capacity for leadership. The few Pharisees who happened to stop and listen to him as he stood discoursing in the Temple gardens have, no doubt, approved his words concerning the Kingdom of God, about God's fatherhood, about a coming day of judgment and the resurrection of the dead; but on the whole they have gone their way unimpressed.

A fatal error has been committed in allowing the Master's Zealot hangers-on to stage a *Putsch* in the Temple area. Its abortive termination has caused his following to dwindle to the handful of friends who were intimately associated with him in Galilee. He is now seeking to escape from the dragnet that Pontius Pilate has out for him. The terrible question "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" which the evangelists put in his mouth as he hangs on the cross, is even now uppermost in his heart. It is inconceivable to Jesus that God should not, in this last moment, save the cause of His own Kingdom by miraculous intervention in a situation that grows more desperate every hour. He wrestles in spirit with God. When emotion reaches that pitch, the mind chokes.

Perhaps the disciples force the Master to drink a cup of wine as he silently deliberates. What was Jesus thinking

of? The red flame by the charcoal fire in the room seems to hold his eyes and absorbs his gaze. It seems as if that single cup in his hand holds a red sea of the blood of all the friends who were but recently slain by Pilate. . . .

He could still have made an about-face at Bethany when friends from Jerusalem warned him that he was not safe in or near the Holy City, that he was sure to run into trouble. Why did he not heed their pleas? There was still time then. .

There was still time then. There is no time now. There is not a moment to lose. A pervasive malign stagnation hangs in the air. The sullen deathlike stillness is getting on the disciples' nerves. The tension is mounting.

The Galileans must get their Master out of the City. If they are to hide again in the dark groves and shrubbery of the Mount of Olives, they must gain the Sheep Gate without delay, cross the bridge over Kidron brook and make a dash for the gardens and orchards where, no doubt, other pilgrims are camping that night. It will be hard for the police to find them there. The disciples know the way. They were there the night before.

Quick, bring a few cloaks! Quick, gather some weapons!

They do manage to get outside the City, whether through the gate, or by lowering themselves from the walls, is immaterial. They have eluded the police. They cross the Kidron brook and reach the gardens at the foot of the Olive Mount. Now they are safe, at least for the time being. In the morning, at dawn when the Master has rested, when he has recovered his strength somewhat, they may continue their way along the trails and tracks that

lead to the Judean Desert, to the Dead Sea, into the Moab mountains, to Idumea perhaps. That is where the aged King David fled when his son Absalom rose against him and seized the throne. There no foe is likely to follow.

The Mount of Olives is an inconsiderable hillock, not above a hundred feet in height. Today the entire area surrounding it, as well as its gently sloping flanks, is encumbered with chapels, wayside stations, cemeteries and monasteries, from which rises, in unbroken adoration, the sound of Greek, Russian and Latin hymns and litanies. In Jesus' day it was a heavily wooded sector wherein predominated the silver-leafed tree which gave the locality its name.

There exists an old legend to the effect that the small company of Galileans on the night of Jesus' arrest penetrated into the groves "as far as the pressing-house." *Gathsemani* is actually the Aramaic word for oil press. This structure, where the oil was extracted from the fruit, has long since disappeared, along with most of the trees. But the roads to Bethany and Jericho still pass nearby. The spot where they cross diagonally may be taken as the most likely scene of Jesus' arrest. At any rate here, or near this intersection, the Galileans seem to have split into two parties.

Some remain on guard at the road crossing, while three accompany Jesus as he withdraws somewhat further, about a stone's throw, into the woods.

Some historians believe that he entered a cave. There are some caves in this vicinity, both visible and invisible. The soil of soft limestone and chalk can easily be broken and to this day reveals any number of underground passages and graves. Jesus may well have entered one of these.

The story of his praying there and of an angel coming

to his support is tender, dramatic and edifying, but it is so obviously a hagiographic fabrication that no more needs to be said except that the three men who are said to have accompanied him fell asleep. Sleeping men see no angels. That story will be invented later and advanced as additional "proof" of supernatural intervention.

With the aid of puerile fables of this sort, the Greek gospel writers seek to impress their readers with the divinity of Jesus. Apparently they do not sense the contradiction in the poor, tracked, cruelly suffering human being who tries to flee but cannot, and the tremendous miraculous powers, the godlike qualities they attribute to him at the same time. The god of the New Testament to whom "all power is given . . . in heaven and in earth" is nowhere more in contradiction with himself than in the accounts of Jesus' arrest.

It is here, in the Garden of Gethsemane, that an attack of hematidrosis comes upon the Master. He starts to sweat blood.* Large drops of it fall on the ground where he lies.

Medical science knows of rare cases of blood-sweating in which the eyes, the nose and the forehead of the sufferer are covered with pearly red drops. Sometimes a glistening crown of dark red fluid appears at the hairline. In extreme cases the blood pours from the whole face in sudden gushes. The sanguinary perspiration is preceded and accompanied by intense anguish. The patient moans and tosses in great pain. He cries out in a raucous, scarcely recognizable voice. At times he becomes hysterical.

Dr. Binet-Sanglé of the *École de Psychologie* of Paris,

* The King James Version (Luke 22:44) reads "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling on the ground." The literal translation of this text from the Greek is, "his sweat turned into what appeared large drops of blood."

remarks that in clinical experiences with hematinosis, the patients are as a rule afflicted with other maladies as well. In other words, hematinosis does not come alone, or rather, its occurrence in a given patient is considered indicative of the presence of another primary disorder.

Amongst patients suffering from attacks of hematinosis was found a high incidence of tuberculosis and pulmonary disease, but still more of nervous disequilibrium. They were, says Binet-Sanglé, given to visionary exaltations of the most disturbing nature, speaking eloquently and enthusiastically of their confidence in hearing divine voices calling them to the performance of deeds of valor or the execution of some high and noble mission. As long as the spell of supreme optimism lasts they seem good-natured and congenial, but extraordinarily proud and self-assertive, boasting of their prowess and mental superiority and of their fitness for the heroic task which they feel called upon to perform.

However, their state of mind may suddenly undergo a profound change. Often they fall from optimism into despair and hypochondria. They become curt, sullen, morose, even hateful and morbid. They lose all their self-esteem, and express themselves self-deprecatingly and as unworthy and unfit for the least good thing. They seek solitude and shun the company of their fellows. It is the attack of hematinosis more or less violent, which liberates them from that depressed state. It seems to afford them both physical and spiritual relief, although the bodily exhaustion remains for a time. What happens is that their brain cells have discharged the excess nervous energy.

Of course, in the case of Jesus there was no simulation, or any attempt at theatrical effect. He was genuinely ill. His moment of high exaltation had passed long before.

Gone was that sense of serene optimism, that balanced sentiment of God's love and God's call descending in his heart. In Gethsemane he was in deepest anguish. The blood-sweating left him totally exhausted and shaking in every limb.

His condition compelled his Galilean friends to give up the project which they had begun to execute when they left the City: further flight was out of the question. The state of their Master's health kept them in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was almost dead to earthly feelings following that hideous crisis. A blind man could see that this unfortunate with his teeth chattering and his lips deadly pale as he gasped for breath, would be unable to continue the journey to the Judean desert. Jesus was not destined to take the few steps that led to life and liberty.

For now his hiding place is discovered. The soldiers have arrived in the garden. Their pitch flares light up the silver verdure of the olive trees. Their voices are heard and their faces become distinguishable. The Centurion takes in the situation at a glance. As he approaches the group of Galileans around their master, a half dozen legionaries draw their swords. Two of the disciples also draw their swords. Others pull their daggers from beneath their cloaks. Cudgels are raised in the air. A few blows are struck. A scuffle ensues. But it is soon over. The Galileans' hearts fail them at the crucial moment. The cohort surrounds them. They become the center of a circle of pointing swords. Jesus cries out aghast: No violence! Throw your weapons away! His disciples break out of the armed cordon, abandoning their Master to his fate. They vanish in the shrubbery. Only one of Jesus' companions, a young man who is not further identified, is seized with him. But he, too, manages to escape by jumping out of his cloak and leaving it in

the hands of his would-be captors. Jesus is taken without the slightest difficulty.

In the various versions of the affair in the New Testament some highly dramatic incidents are interpolated. Peter, for instance, is shown hacking away at a man named Malchus, cutting off the fellow's left ear, which Jesus promptly picks up and restores to its rightful place. Also, the members of the cohort fall prostrate at the sound of Jesus' voice as he answers to his name. These dramatizations are inventions, utterly without value from a historical point of view. They belong in the realm of instructive and edifying commemoration. Their inclusion in the gospel narrative has a propagandistic intent.

The dream is over. The last few supporters run off into the covering blackness of the night. Jesus is alone. God does not perform a miracle. Heaven remains pitiless and silent. No legions of the heavenly host descend to save the cause. The hope of an immediate establishment of a messianic era goes up in smoke.

Jesus' hands are tied and he is led back to the City. In back of the cohort and their prisoner, as they recross the Kidron and enter Jerusalem, the first faint bluish glow of daylight becomes visible above the Olive Mount's tree-tops. The paling young moon casts fantastic shadows on the marvelous whiteness of the City's walls.

It is the moment that the watchman in the Temple tower calls down to his sleeping companions below that the sun has reached the tombs of the Patriarchs near the city of Hebron. It is the hour to light the fires on the altars. In a few minutes the gates will open to admit the priests and Levites of the day's group which is to officiate at the morning service. Some of these may have seen the Roman cohort lead its prisoner into the City.

Jesus himself saw little. After crossing the Kidron, now luminous like the moon fallen flat on the field, he must have passed the Temple's Golden Gate and skirted the walls of the City. But he was oblivious of his surroundings and only stared at the blue above him. He is locked up with some petty criminals, vagabonds and prowlers who have been picked up in the course of the night. He may have been lodged in the same dungeon with the two men who are to be crucified with him later in the day, the two who, according to the New Testament, were indicted on the same charge as Jesus, and who were saved from the massacre in the Temple for a more refined and exemplary punishment.

The Man of Nazareth has a few hours to think upon his fate before he will be questioned by the authorities. Pilate is still asleep. He will not know till nine o'clock that another Galilean rebel has been caught.

THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION

It is still dark when Jesus, according to the New Testament narrative, is led before the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish judicial body in the land. A few hours later, at nine o'clock, he will be crucified. In the brief interval, from the dawn of day until the third hour, he will undergo no less than four different interrogations.

First he is questioned by the Jewish court, then by the Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate. The third inquiry is made by Herod, the king of a neighboring country, who happens to be in Jerusalem for the Passover holy days. Finally, for the fourth questioning, he goes back to Pilate.

The compiler of the work known as the gospel according to St. John writes of still another, a fifth interrogation. He would have it that Jesus was first taken before Annas, the father-in-law of the High Priest Caiaphas, for a preliminary hearing. Annas is made to ask a few perfunctory questions concerning Jesus' doctrine and his disciples, and then sends the Galilean captive straight to Pontius Pilate. There is no mention in St. John's gospel of a trial by the Sanhedrin.

Even so, four trials in less than three hours is something that passes the bounds of credibility. Apparently the gospel writers seek to impress their readers with the importance of the personages and circumstances surrounding the arrest, trial and death of Jesus. They lead him before the highest Jewish tribunal in the state and before the chief Roman magistrate. They bring in the High Priest and his aristocratic relatives, legal experts, scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees, the most eminent persons in the community. Even Pilate's wife and her maid must figure in the drama, while a Herodian puppet-king is dragged in, so to speak, by the hair of his head. Each is given a role to play and each, at first glance, seems to play that role quite plausibly.

When the gospels were written Jesus was no longer a mere itinerant minor prophet or a frustrated messianic rebel from Galilee. He was the Risen Christ of Greek mythology. His name and the scanty memories of his life had been grafted upon and incorporated into a myth that had been current for centuries in the Hellenist East: of a god or demigod who takes on human form, who suffers and dies, but who conquers death by rising from the grave.

The New Testament story is not pure invention. The gospel writers are not frauds. But they are not historians either. The accounts they give are not historic facts. The gospels we know are half-myth, half-fact, creedal affirmations, allegories, liturgical citations and material for edification of the faithful in which elements and fragments of objective, historic truth are mixed with embellishments, miracles, fantasy and mythology.

When the gospel writers deal with Jesus' trial, they have in mind not the poor, baffled and tracked human being who presently pays the price for his ideals and for his seditious words and acts with a gruesome death on

the cross. They describe the gestures, pronouncements and attitudes of a god, who, in the Greek fashion, is about to perform the final and supreme act in a cosmic drama.

He is innocence and goodness personified. The accusations against him are made to appear trivial and unwarranted. The Sanhedrin is a collection of unscrupulous scoundrels without conscience or honor. Those who lodge complaints against Jesus are called false witnesses. The New Testament writers find a passage in Holy Writ referring to a sheep that is dumb before its shearers. They apply it to Jesus. His physical distress and anguish, which prevent him from speaking plainly, are interpreted as prophecy being fulfilled. In spite of his very real state of exhaustion and his grave illness, which make standing up an almost unbearable agony, he is depicted as carrying himself in noble fashion, dignified, self-confident, thoroughly convinced that he is fulfilling the role of savior of the human race.

But what are the facts in the case? Which circumstances and what evidence brand the New Testament's story of the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin as pure fabrication, causing its utter rejection as unhistorical and untrue by a long and impressive line of savants from Reimarus and Strauss to Loisy, Guignebert and Eysinga?

In the first place, there is the positive information we have regarding the composition, mode of procedure and habitual disposition to leniency and mercy of the Jewish Grand Council known by the Greek name of Sanhedrin. Such a tribunal did indeed exist and function in Jesus' time. It was composed of seventy-one members, scholars, doctors, and elders drawn from the chief political

parties, leading families and religious schools. The Sanhedrin was really more than a court of law. It was the parliament of the Hebrew state, and the chief arbiter and final authority on all functions of religion, education and government.

The Talmud gives a thorough description of the qualifications of a Sanhedrist. Members had to be men of exceptional learning, of attested moral integrity and unblemished character. No man could be a member who had not previously filled "three offices of gradually increasing dignity," or who was not "learned in the Sacred Law, both written and unwritten." He must, moreover, be thoroughly proficient in scientific knowledge, and an accomplished linguist, free from haughtiness, never have been occupied with a trade or profession for the sake of gain or financial profit.

He must not, furthermore, be a bachelor, or a married man without children, or the father of a bastard, or a gambler, or a slave dealer, or a ^{usurer} ~~usurer~~. No man was qualified to sit as a judge in the Sanhedrin if he was related to the accused in any degree of ~~consanguinity~~ ^{relationship} whatever, or if he could in any way inherit as heir, or otherwise, by the death or condemnation of the accused person."

The Sanhedrin met in the famous Chamber of Hewn Rock. It was an inflexible rule that the tribunal could not meet until after the morning sacrifice in the Temple. On a day when the High Court was in session—it met on Tuesdays and Thursdays—the seventy-one members, headed by the presiding officer or *Nasi*, who was also the High Priest, filed in solemnly two by two, followed by their disciples. The High Priest, seated in the center of the hemicycle, wore his robes of office: a flowing vestment of blue silk, gathered about the waist by a girdle of scarlet,

with a tunic of pure white linen beneath the robe. The buttons of his outer garment were onyx stones. On his head he wore a turban of blue inwrought with gold, on his feet red slippers embroidered with silver pomegranates, and on his bosom the Aaronite breastplate on which glittered the twelve precious stones symbolic of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Immediately in front of, and slightly below the High Priest sat the clerks of the court; one on his left to write down whatever testimony was adduced against the accused, the other clerk on his right to record what appeared in the accused person's favor.

On each side of the High Priest in a semi-circle sat thirty-five Councilors, members of the Sanhedrin, and at their feet in three rows running downward, the disciples of the Councilors, learned men themselves, "well-versed in the Law," who were sometimes called upon to give an opinion.

No trial was started with an accusation. "Nothing was permitted to be said against an accused person until one of the judges had urged something in his behalf." As a matter of fact, the first argument was always in favor of mercy and fairness and acquittal. The Sanhedrin did not originate charges. It only investigated those brought before it.

Before a witness testified he was led into an adjoining room and there solemnly warned. He was asked such questions as the following: Is it not possible that your belief in the prisoner's guilt or innocence is derived from hearsay or circumstantial evidence? In forming your opinions concerning the guilt of the accused, have you or have you not been influenced by the remarks of persons whom you regard as reputable and trustworthy? Are you aware that

you will be subjected to the most searching questioning? Do you know the penalty attached to the crime of perjury?

After these questions, the most venerable of the judges admonished the witness with the following adjuration: "Forget not, O witness, that it is one thing to give evidence in a trial as to money, and another in a trial for life. In a money suit, if thy witness-bearing shall do wrong, money may repair that wrong. But in a trial for life, if thou sinest, the blood of the accused, and the blood of his seed to the end of time, shall be imputed unto thee. . . . Wherefore let us think and believe that the whole world is created for a man such as he whose life hangs on thy words. . . ."

Following arguments for and against the accused, in which he himself was free, and was urged from time to time, as the trial proceeded, to participate, the discussion became general amongst the judges. The entire record was overhauled. Again and again the scribes were required to read parts of the testimony. No witness was dismissed until the conclusion of the trial, in order that he might be on hand if the judges wanted to test his evidence anew.

When the entire case had been exhaustively reviewed, the balloting started on the guilt or innocence of the accused. The youngest members of the Sanhedrin were required to vote first, in order that they might not be unduly influenced by the example of their seniors in age and authority. The High Priest warned the first voter, who was never less than forty years of age, to give a free and untrammelled verdict and not to be swayed or awed by the presence of venerable masters.

Each member voted by standing up and giving a brief explanation of his decision. No unanimity was required to

convict. A majority vote of at least two sufficed. If thirty-six were in favor of conviction and thirty-five for acquittal, the condemnation of the accused was impossible, and he was acquitted.

In the event of acquittal the prisoner was immediately released. But in the event of conviction, sentence could not be pronounced until the next afternoon. The judges filed out solemnly and stood outside the chamber for hours discussing the case under adjudication. They went home in pairs. But in the evening, after sunset, they visited each other for further deliberation. Their concern was to avoid, if at all possible, the Holy City's becoming the scene of an execution. It was thought a calamity that even one son of Israel, however evil, should pay the penalty for his crimes with the loss of his life in Jerusalem.

In the night that followed the judges fasted and prayed. In the morning they attended the sacrifice in the Temple and again repaired to the Chamber of Hewn Rock where the trial resumed from the beginning. If, at the close of deliberations, the prisoner was again declared guilty, execution followed immediately.

But, says Walter Chandler in his monumental and invaluable *Trial of Jesus*, the death march and the final circumstances attending the execution of a Hebrew prisoner are without parallel in the jurisprudence of the world.

"As the culprit was led away to his doom, a man, carrying . . . a flag was stationed at the entrance of the Sanhedrin Hall. A mounted officer of the court followed the procession at a convenient distance and kept his eyes constantly turned in the direction of the flagbearer. . . . A herald, carrying aloft a staff from which fluttered a crimson banner, made proclamation to the gazing multitude along the way that a human being was about to be executed. He cried out: 'AB is to be put to death on the

testimony of CD and XY, on such and such a charge. If any man knows anything favorable to the accused, in the name of God let him come forward and speak, in order that the prisoner may be led back to the Sanhedrin Hall to be again confronted and tried by his judges.'

"If any witness, friend or stranger, came forth to furnish new evidence in favor of the condemned man, the procession was halted and the accused was led back to the Sanhedrin Chamber. If any member of the court still sitting in the hall of judgment bethought himself of any new argument in behalf of the accused that had not been offered at the trial, he arose quickly in his place and stated it to his fellow-judges. The flag at the gate was then waved and the mounted messenger, chosen for such an emergency, galloped forward to stop the execution.

"The culprit himself could delay or prevent the accomplishment of the death sentence if he could give the Rabbins who escorted him any valid reason why he should not be put to death. He was led back as often as he gave any good excuse, not exceeding five times, the number prescribed by law. If no new witness appeared and if the prisoner made no further plea for life, the procession proceeded to within a short distance of the place of execution. The convict was then exhorted to declare himself guilty of the crime of which he was charged and to make full confession of all his sins. He was told that a full confession would entitle him to a happy existence beyond this life, since the flood of death would wash away all stains of sin and cleanse the soul of all the iniquities of existence in this world. If the condemned man still refused to confess that he was guilty of the crime with which he was charged, he was then urged to say: 'May my death prove an atonement for all my transgressions.'

"He was then led to the ground of execution. The

death draught, consisting of a mixture of frankincense and myrrh, poured into a cup of vinegar or light wine, was then given him. Stupefaction followed, rendering the culprit unconscious of his impending doom and insensible to the agonies of death. In Jerusalem, this benumbing and stupefying mixture was furnished by the Hebrew women, whose tender and merciful regard for the wretched and unfortunate . . . has in all ages been a striking characteristic of the sex. As soon as the draught had been administered the execution took place. The prisoner was either stoned, strangled, burned, or beheaded, according to the nature of his crime. In case of blasphemy or idolatry the dead body was afterwards hung upon a gallows until dusk. But ordinarily the corpse was immediately interred after execution. . . . The relatives were [later] allowed to remove the body and to deposit it in the family burial ground.

“Soon after the execution the friends and relatives of the dead man made friendly calls upon the judges who had tried and sentenced him. These visits were intended to show that the visitors harbored no feelings of bitterness or revenge against those who, in condemning one of their loved ones to death, had only performed the high and righteous duties of just and honorable judges of Israel.”

Our gospels know absolutely nothing of this scrupulous mode of procedure, and the innumerable precautions taken to assure fair treatment of prisoners brought before the Sanhedrin. They have never heard of the Court's high repute. What they picture is a confused and wild scene at the crack of dawn, now in the High Priest's residence with servants and soldiers loitering about, then in the Sanhedrin Hall in even more improbable circumstances.

All rules and prescriptions and all decorum and dignity are thrown to the wind. Jewish sages and dignitaries, pious Pharisees and aristocratic Sadducees behave as if they were Scythian barbarians or a Southern lynch mob. Witnesses barge in and shout wildly, false witnesses at that, according to the gospels. Jesus is beaten in the face and spat upon. His hands are tied during the interrogation. He is badgered with questions concerning a boast he is alleged to have made about destroying the Temple and rebuilding it in three days. The High Priest is shown rending his clothes in a place and at a time when he is strictly forbidden by the Mosaic Law to do so. He accuses Jesus of blasphemy when the Galilean has cautiously refrained from pronouncing the name of God.

Obviously the gospel writers are completely in the dark regarding the real circumstances of Jesus' trial and death. They are guessing and conjecturing, trusting to the ignorance of their readers not to be caught.

They do not know that a preliminary hearing of any kind, such as they allege to have taken place at the residence of Annas, or of Caiaphas (for even on that point there is no certainty in their minds) could not possibly have been held.

They do not know that a formal session of the Sanhedrin could not open until the morning service at the Temple was terminated.

They are not aware that the Sanhedrin never met on a Friday, nor on the eve of the Passover.*

They are perfectly oblivious of the unalterable tradition that sentence was not to be passed on the same day a trial was held.

Jesus never appeared before, and hence never was

* See p. 282, Note 1.

convicted by any Jewish court. The New Testament stories of his condemnation by the Sanhedrin are pure fantasy.

When Pilate learned that Jesus hailed from Galilee, we are told, he promptly dispatched the captive to Herod Antipas, who happened to be in Jerusalem for the feast. That a Roman Procurator should send a rebel who was implicated in a rebellious assault on the capital, to be judged by another authority, and thus cede his jurisdiction over the case, is a glaring improbability.

Moreover, the friendship which is said to have sprung up between Pilate and Antipas (or Herod as he is called in the New Testament) as the result of this incident, is cited as fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy. Whenever New Testament writers introduce a text from the Old Testament in support of their historical veracity, there is always good reason for the reader to be wary.

In the apocryphal gospel of Peter, Jesus is not sent to the palace of Herod Antipas. The dissolute Tetrarch, who was a personal friend of that monster of depravity, the Emperor Caligula, is made to take a seat . . . in the Sanhedrin.

When Jesus goes before Pontius Pilate, a wholly new trial begins. The gospel writers seem to forget that they have just had Jesus tried and sentenced by the Sanhedrin and that nothing remains but the execution. Of course, say the defenders of the authenticity of the gospel accounts, this is as it should be: Pilate now merely needs to ratify the sentence pronounced by the Jewish court. The Jews had no authority to put anyone to death.

If this were true, if Pilate merely had to ratify the

Jewish sentence, it would be a Jewish sentence that would have been carried out; that is to say, Jesus would have been put to death either by stoning, by strangulation, by burning, or by decapitation.

The incontrovertible fact is that he was put to death by the ignominious Roman method of crucifixion. The only trial that Jesus underwent took place before Pontius Pilate, whose troops had arrested him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Who were the men that arrested Jesus, and upon whose suggestion or command did they act? The New Testament does not clearly establish their identity, so that we are forced to explore the concomitant circumstances for an explanation of the difficulty. Dr. Guignebert, the greatest authority on the life and times of Jesus, feels certain that the Jewish authorities were not involved in the matter. He leans to the view that the arresting party was made up of self-appointed vigilantes, tipsters, stool pigeons and other social riffraff of that kind. But why? A mob of that sort, acting on its own initiative (and for some mysterious reason of its own), would have had no interest in turning Jesus over to the constituted authorities, whether Roman or Jewish, but would rather, it seems to us, have lynched him right then and there.

Did Pilate have to resort to such a secretive, underhanded procedure, as to send a bunch of gangsters? It is not inconceivable that the Governor was informed by someone in Jesus' immediate entourage of the Galileans' nocturnal hiding place, and that, in order to avoid a disturbance in the crowded Temple area in full daylight, he acted swiftly and secretly at night. But for that he needed no mobsters. A regular military patrol was much more reliable and would proceed with far more discretion and dispatch. An

irregular armed gang marching through the streets would have set the whole city agog. A regular patrol, going on its appointed rounds, would not have drawn any unusual attention.

"If Jesus was crucified," says Alfred Loisy, "he was sentenced by and executed by the Roman authorities as a seditious person." Then he was also arrested by order of the same authority.

The intention of the New Testament legend writers to fasten responsibility for the crucifixion upon the Jews is quite evident in the stories of the arrest. The Lord's condemnation by Pilate is virtually extorted from or imposed upon the Procurator, who, for himself, is made to say in the New Testament, that he finds the accused person without guilt. "That is why," remarks Loisy, "a judgment by the Sanhedrin had to be concocted, as well as a condemnation by the same judicial body on the grounds of alleged pretensions by Jesus of being the Son of God, that is to say, a divine quality which the Galilean prophet did not claim for himself but which was claimed for him many years after his death by the makers of the Christian mystery religion."

Loisy calls this a double anachronism: 1) in view of the fact, that although the Sanhedrin, in the time of the Procurators, had full power over the Palestine Jews, political questions were excepted from its jurisdiction; and 2) Jesus was condemned (all the four evangelists being in agreement on this point) as "King of the Jews," which is the equivalent of a messianic agitator and pretender to the throne of Israel by subverting the imperial hegemony.

The juridical case of Jesus is historically intelligible only if we admit that Pilate, as the representative of the Roman authority, acted alone, on his own initiative from

beginning to end, from ordering the arrest to ordering the crucifixion.

"Must we repeat again," asks Loisy, "that the New Testament texts do not deal with historical facts, but with catechesis and apologetics?"

The Jewish people and the Jewish authorities had no interest whatever in seeing Jesus arrested and executed. But the Romans did. Pilate did not look upon the leader of a band of Galilean rebels as a harmless teller of religious tales. The Procurator understood better than most modern Christian theologians the meaning and implications of that Kingdom of God whose advent Jesus preached. To Pilate a messianic movement to usher in the Kingdom of God was a tangible and immediate threat. In his position, as guardian of the imperial hegemony, he would have been a fool and remiss in his duties if he had not arrested and eliminated Jesus.

However, the trial by Pontius Pilate was not dominated by the mob rule, confusion and irregularities with which the evangelists surround it. The Roman overlords may have been proudly contemptuous of the turbulent nation of the Jews, but they brooked no interference in matters of law and jurisprudence. No Roman magistrate could have turned a solemn trial for life into so sorry a farce and mockery as the evangelists have made of it. The trial of Jesus by Pontius Pilate was conducted with the traditional judicial regularity and solemnity of a Roman Court.

Those Jewish chief priests and elders whom the gospel writers introduce into a *praetorium* as so many whirling dervishes crazed by hatred, adjuring Pilate with their shouts, threats and imprecations to speed Jesus to his death, were decently at home at the time, or more likely, at the

Temple assisting at the morning sacrifice. It was the day of Passover, the most solemn feast day in the year. Jews had other things to do than make a foolish and utterly pointless show of themselves before the Roman magistrate.

Very little is known of Pilate beyond the brief notes in our gospels, an indirect reference in Suetonius, and the mention of his procuratorship by Philo of Alexandria and by Flavius Josephus the historian. Philo accuses him of "corruption, violence, robberies, ill-treatment of the people, grievances, continuous executions without even the form of a trial, endless and intolerable cruelties." Josephus gives a similar account.

The veracity of this outcry against the Procurator cannot be confirmed because of lack of detailed information regarding the origin of the animosity which he personally may have aroused in the Jewish people. The Jews detested not only Pilate, but every one of the Procurators sent to rule over them. It was not so much a question of regretting the loss of their independence and suffering from the painful awareness of being a subject or client people. They had hardly enjoyed more freedom under their own Hasmonean kings and under Herod than under Caesar's lieutenants. The presence of the alien ruler was felt as an offense to their religion. There lay the crux of their resentment against the Roman Procurators. There is no question but that this was the sentiment of the majority of the Jewish people. On that point they never disarmed or compromised no matter who was the individual ruling on Caesar's behalf. Their ideal was a Jewish republic with God as the Master, and the Torah for constitution.

"Very scrupulous, very sincere, ardently religious," says Guignebert, "the people defended themselves more

by their fanaticism against the authority and the presence of the stranger than by their nationalism."

There is no doubt that some Procurators had been guilty of abuse of power. Valerius Gratus, the immediate predecessor of Pontius Pilate, deposed five of the High Priests in rapid succession. For what reason, we do not know. He is also the man who assumed custody of the sacerdotal vestments of the High Priest so that an application for their use had to be made each time they were needed, which sounds like an act of outright provocation.

Pilate seems to have been more tolerant of the Jews' religious scruples, but not until he had been taught a lesson. His predecessors in office had avoided giving offense by keeping out of Jerusalem flags and emblems bearing the image of the Emperor. Pagan standards had not been seen in the Holy City until Pilate came to take charge. He caused the garrison to march in with banners unfurled and with the eagles and the images of Tiberius in full view. The sight of the Emperor's likeness threw the Jews into wild excitement. Delegations of leading citizens implored the Procurator to withdraw the emblems and cease the outrage to their God. Without making a reply Pilate went off to Caesarea, leaving the God-defying images prominently displayed at the Antonia Citadel in the very shadow of the Temple.

Thousands of Jerusalemites, who were joined by other multitudes from the provinces, followed the Procurator to his coastal residence. They besieged his palace. For five days the crowd fasted and prayed under the walls and would not budge. To the pleas of the delegations Pilate turned a deaf ear. Finally he flew into a rage. He summoned the people to the arena and had the place surrounded by troops in full battle equipment.

He warned them that if they did not quietly go home

and leave the images in Jerusalem untouched, he would give the word of command to put them all to death. To his amazement the spokesmen of that immense multitude told him that they preferred death to the desecration of God's house. All those present threw themselves on the ground, bared their necks and challenged Pilate to go ahead.

In the end Pilate yielded: he ordered the images withdrawn, and the people returned home. The Procurator knew henceforth with what stiff-necked and fanatical subjects he had to deal.

Tertullian, the Church Father, tells us that Pilate was really a Christian at heart, and the Ethiopian Church, bearing in mind Tertullian's sentiments, actually raised the pagan Procurator to sainthood, on the ground that he served as God's chosen instrument in bringing about mankind's redemption by the shedding of Jesus' blood.

Other Christian apologists have pictured the Procurator as a pitiable, cringing creature, totally bereft of moral courage and justice in that, knowing Jesus to be innocent, he nevertheless gave in to the wicked Jews' demand to have him put to death. Documents purporting to contain a record of the Judean Governor's life and of his judgment in Jesus' case, the so-called *Acts of Pilate*, circulated in the Western churches in the third and fourth centuries. They were proven to be crude forgeries from the hand of . . . the saint-maker Tertullian.

Renan thought Pilate a good administrator. The great French exegete no doubt referred to the time the Procurator appropriated a large sum of money for the construction of an aqueduct from the pool of Solomon to Jerusalem. "A wholly commendable enterprise speaking well for his ability and statesmanship," Renan calls it. The Jewish people thought otherwise. The sequestration of ritually

pure coin was taken as a provocation. Pilate's workers were attacked and driven to shelter. The Procurator restored order with a bloody show of force.

It is generally accepted that Pilate was a native of Spain, or at least not a descendant of one of the old indigenous Roman families. After serving on the Rhine under Germanicus, he came to Rome in pursuit of fortune and pleasure. He was married to Claudia Procula, the granddaughter of Augustus.

The girl was fifteen years old. She came of degenerate stock; her mother Julia had a reputation for lewdness, shameful conduct and coarseness hardly surpassed by the imperial prostitute Messalina. But she was permitted to follow her husband to Judea, not, as might be supposed, in order to keep Pilate out of mischief, but so that her husband could keep an eye on her and be held responsible for any transgressions on the part of a girl who at so tender an age was already suspected to be of questionable virtue.

One of the gospel writers introduces this Claudia in his narrative as having been warned in a dream concerning "the just man" Jesus who appeared before her husband on the morning of Passover. As a result Claudia, too, has been canonized. Evidently, a great deal can be accomplished by dreams in sacred history. Three hundred and fifty years later Helena, still another saint, and the mother of the Emperor Constantine, located the lost site of Jesus' crucifixion and burial as the result of a vision in a dream. On that site stands today the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, one of the most sacred objects of veneration on the part of the faithful, in spite of the fact that archaeological research has definitely proven Helena's "hunch" to have been erroneous.

During the Second World War the site of the wall

of Jerusalem in Jesus' day was uncovered. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher stands deep within the circumference of that wall. Executions and burials in the beginning of our era were performed at a considerable distance outside Jerusalem.

The late Marshal Lyautey, who occupied a position in tumultuous Morocco during World War I not unlike that of Pontius Pilate in Judea in the beginning of our era, once gave his views on the political situation and the tense atmosphere in which Pilate found himself in Jerusalem during the fateful week of Passover.

"I always thought it strange," he told me, "that Pilate waited three years before he ordered Jesus arrested. Either something must have been wrong with the Procurator's intelligence service, or the gospels have greatly exaggerated the stir caused by Jesus' appearance in the Holy Land. Jesus had passed through the whole country preaching, haranguing the multitudes and healing diseases. Every person in the East who manages to collect a crowd around him ought to be watched. That was always my view. During my term as *résident-général* in Morocco I always kept informed of what those itinerant *mullahs* and *ulemas* were telling the people. Most of the time they were harmless individuals, perfectly innocuous, some of them mere doddering idiots. . . . But I never overlooked the fact that there is a little *mullah* born every minute. One of them may have the fire of a Mohammed and become the prophet of a new idea. Such a one was Jesus. Unquestionably, a Roman governor in Judea could not tolerate a person who told the people such things as: 'Ye know that in this world the princes and the mighty ones have authority, but in the

Kingdom which I bring it shall not be so.' That's dangerous talk. That's inflammatory, especially in the inflammatory East. A fellow who talks like that should be watched carefully."

"But Jesus also urged," I ventured to interrupt the Marshal, "that the people give unto Caesar what was Caesar's."

"Did he?" snorted M. Lyautey. "Did he now, *parbleu*? Are you sure of that? I tell you that I do not interpret that text as do the theologians. Jesus asked to be shown a coin. Then, pointing to the imperial effigy, he said, 'whose likeness is that?' 'That's Caesar's likeness,' they told him. 'Well then, give it to him. Let Caesar have his coin. And be done with it!' *A mon avis*, Jesus replied contemptuously to that question, as if he wanted to say, leave me alone with your bosh about Caesar. No, you may be sure of it: in the Kingdom of which Jesus dreamed and spoke there was no room for Caesar, or for Pontius Pilate, or for the princes and mighty ones. The whole Roman Empire was anathema to him.

"What did the first Christians say when the Empire collapsed? 'She is fallen,' they shouted. 'She is fallen, the great whore, Babylon!' That's what they called Rome, those Galileans and their spiritual descendants. To them Rome was *la grande putain* with whom the kings of the earth had fornicated and who had fed on the blood of the saints. . . . The Christians rejoiced over the destruction of Rome. They were happy about it. They saw the realization of a destruction of which Jesus had only dreamed. For he was first and foremost a nationalist Jew, this Jesus, a nationalist Jew with a religious idea, the archetype of a revolutionary, much more dangerous than a mere agitator of sedition. If Jesus' ideas had been translated into reality,

not only in Judea, but in the whole world at large, there would be an entirely different story to tell, I dare say. I do not think *nous autres Français* would be in Morocco, or the British in India. That is, if Jesus had realized his dreams. . . . Fortunately St. Paul came along later and effectively destroyed the revolutionary ferment in Christianity. St. Paul made Christianity respectable and acceptable to decent people, instead of a call to slaves and rabble. . . . But Jesus, ah, he, I believe, he was removed just in time. . . .

"Imagine the situation in Judea in Pilate's day. It had been a bad province for Rome ever since the conquest by Pompey. Little Judea gave Rome more trouble than Gaul. The Empire had to keep its best legions in garrison there, legions that were sorely needed elsewhere: against the Batavi, Nervii, and Celts. The Jews were a restless crowd. They had never, you might say never, you hear, disarmed morally. They flew in the face of Assyria and Babylon and Egypt, pitched themselves insanely against those mighty empires. They had watched these colossi topple into the abyss of history. . . . In Pilate's day they were waiting for a chance to throw off the Roman yoke. They were fanatical patriots. We talk sometimes of the Jews as a people without a country, as a people of nomadic wanderers, but we forget that the Jews defended their land with a heroism and desperation seldom witnessed anywhere else. They never resigned themselves, as the Greeks did, for instance, to the loss of their national independence. Why, the very presence of Pontius Pilate in their Holy City was a provocation to them. They would have thrown themselves against Pilate's legions with their bare hands, had the Procurator dared to set up an altar to Caesar in the Temple courts, or in the gardens around their great sanctuary. . . . They were always on the verge of revolt. . . .

"Passover was the critical time of the year. That was

the feast when the Jews commemorated their liberation from bondage in Egypt. The City was filled with pilgrims, shepherds, peasants, fishermen, all of them burning with a mortal hatred for the Roman overlord and imbued with an expectation of a messianic deliverer to restore their national freedom and independence. They awaited some descendant of the House of David who would shatter the bonds of foreign oppression and crush the foes of Israel. Do you think Pilate did not know all this? Believe me, he did. He knew what was up. The taverns of Jerusalem were filled with crowds of men who would have needed but one signal to storm the Antonia Citadel and massacre the Roman garrison. . . . Jewish women were out in the streets, shopping for the holy days. . . . Black-eyed damsels, powdered and perfumed, who swayed their hips sensually under their thin linen garments as they walked through the Bazaar. Can you see them? Ah, *mon Dieu*, what a show! *Quel cadre!* Can you imagine what would have happened if one of these Germanic legionaries idling there in the sunshine near David's Tower, had suddenly made a suggestive gesture to one of those daughters of Zion in sight of those fierce Galilean fishermen? Can you? I can. There would have been a general assault. That is the way revolts start. An incident, *une bagatelle*, was needed in Jerusalem to set off a spark in a powder magazine. Believe me, Pontius Pilate was in an unenviable position!

"The peace of Judea—what do I say?—the peace of the world was at the mercy of an incident. Jerusalem was a seething caldron! Judas Maccabeus was dead, but his spirit lived in a hundred thousand determined men. The mountains of Moab swarmed with bands of patriotic exiles. Ordinarily, these men roamed the desert regions, out of reach of the Roman patrols. But on the high religious holy

day they filtered into the national capital to mix with the festive crowds as the outlaws do to this day in Morocco, when they come to the fair of Marrakech and Fez and Meknes. These partisans met in the back rooms of caravan-serais. They drank. They sang songs. Fists were clenched as the red wine mounted to their heads. They stamped their staves on the floor. They were ready. They were willing to go out and fight. Now or never! Deliver the blow that would shake the imperial authority. Only a few years ago [1925] we saw how these things are done, when the chiefs of the Djebel Druses sneaked into the city of Damascus to meet with the leaders of all the subversive anti-French secret societies in the metropolis. In one day we had a first-class revolt on our hands which cost us terrible casualties. Fortunately, a certain group of Syrian patriots cooperated with us by warning the authorities of the impending storm, else we would have been taken entirely unawares and the disaster would have been incalculable.

“Ah, no question, Jesus was a dangerous character. He had picked his friends amongst the plebeians. . . . He was always in the company of slaves and loose women; in short, he recruited his followers, like Spartacus in Rome, amongst an element that has been most prone to revolt at all times in history. When Pilate’s spies brought him news of the exhorter who talked of founding a new rule, a new kingdom, the Procurator had no other course but to arrest Jesus. *Raisons d’état* demanded that short shrift be made of an agitator of that sort. ‘Are you a king?’ asked Pilate when he questioned Jesus. And what was the answer? Did he deny it? No, the Galilean carpenter replied in the affirmative. *C’était un peu ridicule tout de même*, but it was suffi-

cient. Pilate sent him away to be crucified. What else could he do?"

That was the view of a layman, a non-theologian, and hence, in the estimation of professional theologians, a person not qualified to judge or give an opinion. Yet, it cannot be denied that Marshal Lyautey came rather close to the actual happenings in connection with Jesus' activities, his arrest and execution. Charles Guignebert, who read Lyautey's remarks, told his students at the Sorbonne: "I have always said that criticism is ninety-five per cent common sense and five per cent erudition."

Pilate, in accordance with Roman custom, did not take his seat in the judgment hall till nine in the morning, that is to say when the evangelists, in their ignorance of the happenings of that day, have Jesus already at the place of execution.

Pilate was not in a hurry. Why should he be? The business in hand was not pressing. One more rebel from that Galilean hotbed of sedition had fallen into his hands. He had caused hundreds of Jews to be executed without the slightest compunction. One more or less would make little difference. He knew the charges against the particular prisoner now securely in custody. There would not be much time wasted in deliberations and questioning. Only the rules must be followed. The dignity of the Roman power must be upheld. The prisoner must have a fair trial.

The trial was brief. Pilate ordered the prisoner brought up from one of the dungeons in the Antonia Citadel where he had lain since his arrest in the Garden.

Contrary to the impression conveyed by the New Testament's accounts, as well as by a large number of more

or less sacred pictures, painted a thousand and two thousand years after the event they purport to portray, Jesus was not alone with Pontius Pilate in the judgment hall during the trial. When the Galilean prisoner was brought up from the dungeon where he had lain since his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, he faced a full court consisting of the presiding officer, assessors, clerks, councilors, advocates, attendants, military guards, torturers, as well as Roman citizens who were friends of the court—all of whom were required by law to be present.

Doré and Munkacsy, among other well-known artists, have given us pictures of Jesus before Pilate in which the Nazarene is shown in immaculate white garments and as a person of superbly regal bearing whose commanding stature, attitude and gestures easily dominate the scene.

Pilate is generally shown as a deeply perplexed creature, who, with a puzzled frown on his forehead, looks with awe and trembling at the captive before him. In one of his renowned compositions, Gustave Doré goes so far as to show Jesus descending the steps of the *praetorium* with his head wreathed in a golden aureole, a circumstance that apparently so impresses the Jewish rabble standing about that several spectators bow their heads in awesome reverence, or even fall prostrate on their faces.

Nothing in these scenes corresponds with the reality. In the first place, Pilate, the warrior from Spain and the cruel butcher of the Galilean Zealots, was not likely to cringe in a corner like a whipped dog when Jesus entered the hall which was filled with officials and functionaries. Nowhere in Roman history can be found a trace of a humane regard for prisoners or slaves.

In the second place, no Jews were about when Jesus was tried, except in the streets, in the vicinity of the *prae-*

torium, as they passed by, totally unaware of the drama being enacted inside.

The act of accusation was read as a matter of course when Pilate opened the session with the perfunctory question: "What accusation is brought against this man?"

The New Testament intimates that "the Jews," at the instigation of the elders and priests, answered Pilate's question by shouting the accusation. This is a false text, a wilful distortion of the procedure. The Romans would not have permitted a mob scene of that sort. Moreover, no Jews were present. Jews would not have set foot in the *praetorium* had they been invited for the occasion. They would not have wanted to defile themselves by entering the pagan judgment hall.

Upon Pilate's question, an assessor read the list of crimes. First mentioned, of course, was the irruption into the Temple area, that frustrated insurrection which had caused the death of the Galilean partisans of Jesus and which had brought him into public view. Pilate knew all about that. For his connection with that serious affront to the Roman power Jesus had in fact been sought and apprehended.

In the matter of Jesus' religious views Pilate was not interested. The Procurator entertained a supreme and haughty contempt for the religion of the Jews, and all things pertaining to it. The Jewish religion appeared to him, as to most Romans, an agglomeration of gross and barbarous superstitions. To a man who had realized his ambition of living at the court of Caesar, "where all virtues and religious restrictions were openly ridiculed and ignored," the endless discussions of the Jews on the observance of their Divine Law seemed pointless, childish and absurd. To Pilate the Jews' religion was the source of what

he considered their anarchistic temperament, their insolence and their haughty contempt for him and his imperial master. Pilate shared the views of the avowed anti-Semite Sejanus, to whom he was indebted for his career and for his Judean appointment.

There was no theological or philosophical discussion between Pilate and Jesus on the meaning of truth, or any other subject. But the Procurator pricked up his ears when the word messiah was mentioned. There lay the root of the matter. That word had a familiar ring. It had political significance. It stood for something serious. What is a messiah? What does it mean when a man is said to be motivated by messianic aspirations, or urged by a messianic ideal? Let us be clear about it.

—Would you, excellent friend, Pilate asks one of his grammarians or interpreters, translate that crass barbaric word into Latin or Greek?

Messiah? Messiah? Riddle me, riddle me, randy row, what is a messiah? Pilate's grammarians have never heard a definition of that word, nor of an interpretation of the office of a Jewish messiah. They will be in their graves a long time before Christian schoolmen set forth their understanding of the concept of a Jewish messiah.

—What does it mean then?

—It seems to mean: *dux, basileus, rex*, a leader, a doer of mighty deeds, a . . . king.

—A king? Is this man a king?

Pilate looks at Jesus with incredulous eyes.

—Yes, it is claimed for the prisoner at the bar that he is a descendant of the founder of the Judean dynasty. He is said to have royal blood in his veins. They say he is a son of the warrior kings of his nation. He is a prince of the blood royal.

—Of the blood royal? Isn't he a Galilean?

—That he is. His speech is Aramaic. His dress and manners are those of the typical Galilean rustic. He consorts with the lowest *plebs* from that province. In several Galilean localities he caused a commotion and was in trouble. But he slipped away before he could be apprehended. Several years ago he was mixed up with the movement headed by that John who baptized at Bethabara beyond Jordan, and who was executed in the fortress of Makaur by order of the Tetrarch Herod Antipas. For a time he forbade people to mention that he is the messiah. It was evident that he was plotting. But in Nazareth, in the synagogue, he openly proclaimed himself to be that person.

—What person?

—The messiah, the leader sent by their God to liberate the Hebrew nation.

—Liberate them? From what? From whom? From us? From Caesar?

This is grave business. The Procurator is now on the alert.

—Are you a king? Pilate asks, addressing himself directly to Jesus.

—Yes, I am a king, replies the Galilean. But my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, I would have commanded my servants to fight for me. . . .

—You lie. Your servants did fight for you in the Temple and at Siloam, and last night again in the Garden of Gethsemane. Do not give false testimony in this court, in the presence of Caesar's emblem. Do you not know that I have power to set you free or to have you crucified?

—You would not have power over me if it weren't

given you from on high, says Jesus. He who delivered me to you, he adds, referring to the common informer who betrayed him to the Roman police, is more guilty than you.

Jesus said his Kingdom was not of this world. What is "a kingdom not of this world"? Pilate can hardly be expected to be informed on a subject on which the most learned theologians of the ages have not been able to agree, and on which they remain at odds to this very day.

To a Roman Procurator a kingdom, a *malkut*, a *basileia*, an *imperium*, whatever the language, is something very definite. A kingdom is not a castle in the air, not something to speak of slightly or banteringly. It isn't to Jesus either.

Pilate presses the question: Are you a king? meaning, have you views or designs on overthrowing the established order, the Roman power in Judea, by violence or intimidation or by any means whatsoever?

Jesus sees no way out of his predicament. All he knows is that he is deserted by his partisans, that he is alone, caught in the grasp of these merciless foreigners. What is the use of arguing with this man with the clean-shaven face and the close-cropped hair, this ruler of the uncircumcised? One should not throw pearls before swine, or feed the dogs with the food that belongs to the children.

All is lost! In a last access of strength and desperation Jesus raises himself to his full height and he cries out defiantly in the face of his judges: Yes, I am a king. This is my mission. . . . I came to bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is of the truth hears my voice.

Pilate has heard enough. He is not going to be drawn into a dispute with this Jew. The Roman masters have always respected the freedom of conscience of their widely

scattered subject peoples. Only when confronted with opposition of a purely political character have they acted with severity. Never would Pilate have condemned a man whose precept "my Kingdom is not of this world" signified that he and his followers did not object to the imperial administrative regulations or that they intended to remain apart from political and social life. Instead of condemning that kind of a "Prince of Peace," the Roman power, harassed and exasperated by the perpetual revolts started by Jewish agitators, would have accorded him a pension.

The Procurator has formed an opinion of Jesus. That Galilean is an enemy. He is a fanatic. It would simply mean more trouble to let him loose. He would start his agitation again tomorrow.

Take him away. Crucifixion! Pilate signals with his head, as he signs the *nominatio*, the indictment.

Jesus is now condemned to die. The Procurator's verdict is final. Not being a Roman citizen, the Galilean has no right to appeal to a higher court, to the Senate, for instance, or to the privy council of the Emperor, as Paul of Tarsus will be privileged to do on a later occasion. In accordance with custom the execution is to take place immediately. Jesus begins the painful last march to Calvary's hill.

Before the military detachment starts off with its prisoner, the gospel writers have something to tell us. They say that the legionaries who had been present at the trial, took Jesus into the courtyard of the *praetorium*, to have a little sport with him. They call in the entire cohort, that is to say all the troops on duty at the Antonia Citadel, to join in the fun. They strip the prisoner, throw a scarlet

cloak over his shoulders, force a reed of rosewood into his right hand by way of a scepter, and having plaited a crown of thorns, they place it on his head. They bend the knee in mock salutation and deride him by calling him "the king of the Jews." They spit in his face, strike him on the cheek and otherwise maltreat and humiliate him. We have all seen pictures of the scene and we have all felt indignant at the outrageous treatment of Jesus by the soldiers.

What takes place in the palace yard is really a repetition of the happenings in the Hall of the Sanhedrin, or in the antechamber of the Jewish High Priest's house, except that in the case of the *praetorium* Jesus is also made to undergo the savage punishment of flagellation. That is: he is given a beating by the Roman *lictor* with a cat o' nine tails of leather straps with sharp fragments of lead or bone and hooks at the end which tear the flesh as the blows descend.

We know from Roman historical records that flagellation was applied only in cases of extreme gravity, and that only men of exceptional physique could stand up under it. Slaves were often punished this way, and they generally succumbed under the savage treatment.

Jesus was no slave, and did not deserve "this additional refinement of barbarism." The administration of *flagellatio* was not included in a condemnation to be crucified. Not five percent of the prisoners so treated would have lived through it to pay the supreme penalty later.

The flagellation is included in the gospel story for a definite purpose. The evangelists want to show, in the most moving manner conceivable, how the divinity of their Lord was callously disregarded and ignored by his contemporaries.

In the apocryphal gospel according to St. Peter, Jesus

is not led outside into the courtyard, but made to do the impossible: he is forced into the very seat of Pontius Pilate, the sacrosanct *sedia curulis* over which stood the inscription *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, in token that Rome itself spoke here. St. Peter's apocryphal gospel makes Jesus undergo the outrages of the soldiery while seated on that august bench. When the troops strike him, they say: "thus we honor the Son of God. . . ."

These are not the words of Roman soldiers. These are words put in their mouths by Christian propagandists who pretended that Jesus was a divine being. These words are not only put into the mouths of Roman soldiers, but into the mouths of the Jewish people as well. For it is said that Pilate delivered Jesus up, "for the people to do with him as they liked."

The incident of the flagellation and the ribald scene in Pilate's palace yard are as much a fabric of the evangelistic imagination as are the similar incidents in the hall of Caiaphas' house.

In the middle of the trial, the evangelists insert the well-known episode of Barabbas, which is a curious and valuable addition from more than one point of view. Matthew writes that at Passover, "the governor was wont to release a prisoner, whomsoever they desired." Mark continues: "And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying, will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them."

It is at this point that Pilate makes the gestures which earned him the recommendation to sainthood by Tertullian. He tells the multitude that he finds no guilt in Jesus. He has a bowl of water brought out and, symbolically, washes his hands in sign that he will not have anything to do with the condemnation of "this just man." He nevertheless delivers Jesus up to be crucified, inasmuch as the Jews "cried out the more exceedingly: crucify him." The Jews absolve Pilate through the addition of what Guignebert calls "the false text": "his blood be on us and on our children." John's gospel adds that the Jews said: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend."

No doubt Pilate had the right to release a prisoner, even if he thought him guilty, but from what we know of him, he was not the kind of person to be so easily intimidated by a mob. And why should he have done so in the case of a man who was caught in the act of insurrection?

And what, incidentally, was the insurrection the evangelists mention here? They have never spoken of it before. Can it be that they refer to the insurrection by Jesus' followers, the assault on the Temple and on the Tower of Siloam? In the manuscript of Origen, the convicted insurrectionary is called Jesus bar Abbas, which means literally Jesus the Son of the Father. Wasn't that Jesus of Nazareth? Have not the gospel writers juggled the few facts and turned their whole account of Jesus' trial into an insoluble puzzle?

Let us look at the story again and pick out the most glaring improbabilities and impossibilities.

Pilate is on his judgment seat at dawn on a day when he knows there is no session of the court.

The Jewish High Priests and elders are expressly mentioned as being present in or near the *praetorium* when

they should be, and were, at the Temple on that solemn feast day.

The mob invades the *praetorium* to argue back and forth with the Procurator who disregards all forms of procedure, rules, regulations, dignity, decorum and order.

The Jewish multitude, according to Matthew extremely well disposed towards Jesus only the day before, is now fiercely hostile to him.

On top of that, the pagan Pilate enters into a religious argument with the Jews. They tell him that Jesus has called himself the Son of God, and that for this statement he deserves death. Pilate, of course, does his utmost to earn the title of saint in the Coptic Church three hundred years later, and seeks to release Jesus. He is made to think of something that never existed, except in the fantastic inventive capacity of the gospel writers: a custom of releasing a prisoner at Passover. He proposes that he let Jesus go free. But the Jews are no less adroit, they produce Barabbas out of their hats, and launch into a vehement bargaining. Barabbas is released, and Jesus is sent off to be crucified.

An evil-doer, a dangerous insurrectionary, a convicted murderer is released, *according to custom!* A strange custom! Small wonder that no document, record or historian, either Roman or Jewish, refers to it anywhere.

The whole story is so absurd that it were better passed over in silence, were it not that the intention of the gospel writers is made evident: they wish to present Pilate as an innocent, impotent bystander, and load the crime on the Jewish people. "The scene produces a theatrical effect," says Guignebert, "but is more puerile and banal than realistic."

Beyond the fact that it took place, the evangelists, it

is quite evident, know absolutely nothing about the actual circumstances of Jesus' appearance before Pilate. Hence they resort to the trick of introducing imaginary incidents. They dress up the trial with a show of local color. As the Dutch saying goes, they have heard the bell ring, but they do not know where the clapper hangs.

The Roman soldiers did have a game they played once a year in the garrison of Alexandria in which one of them was dressed up as a king and was called Barabbas. They made sport with this individual, set a crown of weeds and thorns on his head, placed a scepter in his hands, bowed before him and slapped his face at the same time. Seated backwards on a donkey, he was led through the streets, and made the object of indignities and howled acclamations, very much in the manner of the Fools' Pope who centuries later was trotted out once a year at the fairs in the medieval Netherlands and France.

The gospel writers have heard of the Alexandrian mystery play and bring it to bear on the trial of Jesus. It fits well into the environment. It even sounds plausible, and it does what it is intended to do: charge the Jews with the murder of God's son.

Shortly after Pilate pronounced judgment, the troops emerged with their prisoner from the monumental gate of the Antonia fortress and turned into the narrow dark streets of the City's western quarter. The time might have been around ten or eleven in the morning. At the head of the small procession walked a man playing a flute to draw the street crowd's attention to the fact that an execution was about to take place. Behind the flute player came three legionaries carrying the tablets on which were written in large letters, the act of accusation, a brief outline of the interrogation and the Procurator's verdict.

Next came the *praeco* or herald who cried aloud, for the illiterate, the name of the condemned man and the reasons for his execution. The *praeco* was followed by the centurion in charge, and the four or six executioners with the prisoner in their midst. Flanking the executioners was a line of legionaries with drawn swords and lowered lances, while a detachment of twenty soldiers brought up the rear.

Whether the sight of Jesus on the way to death excited much curiosity, or brought out a large concourse of people, is not known. The chances are that the spectacle was not an unusual one in Jerusalem, and that men stopped for a moment to look and listen and then went on their way. Women perhaps hid their faces.

Jesus was forced to carry his own cross. That was the rule. But it was not the entire cross, merely the crossbeam on which he was to be nailed and suspended. The tree proper to which the crossbeam was to be attached, lay with other debris of previous executions on Golgotha, "the hill of the skulls." As soon as he had walked a few paces, it became clear that Jesus was unable to support the weight of the crossbeam. He was suffering atrociously. He had not slept the previous night. He had not eaten or drunk for a long time. He was desperately ill. He stumbled and fell several times. The centurion, becoming aware of the prisoner's distress, halted the procession and ordered one of the soldiers to carry the heavy plank.

Why, or by what right the centurion should have pressed a passing farmer into the service, as the gospels would have it, is not clear, nor is it important. The gospel story at this point swarms with Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled, a circumstance rendering the authenticity of all related events extremely doubtful.

Jesus drags himself, or is half-carried the remaining distance to the hill of execution.

Where was Golgotha or Calvary located? Most certainly not at the site shown in present-day Jerusalem, at a distance of approximately twenty yards from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Executions, both Roman and Jewish, took place outside the city walls. The exact location of the site of execution is not known. The destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, when the surviving friends and followers of the Galilean Master were dispersed and quit the Holy City, effaced the location of the site forever from the ken of history.

Arrived on the hillock, Jesus is offered an anaesthetic in the form of a cup of wine mixed with myrrh. He declines the drink. He is thereupon surrounded by legionaries who undress him except for a loincloth. He is stretched out on the cross and his hands are nailed to the crossbeam, his feet to the horizontal ledge. Before raising the cross aloft and putting it in the hole dug in the ground, one of the *car-ni-fices* or hangmen, nails a short plank between the prisoner's legs. This is to support the weight of the body, which otherwise would tear the hands in no time.

Dr. Johannes Richter has given us the pathological phases of death by crucifixion in his *Biblical Archaeology*. The unnatural position and violent tension of the body cause painful sensations at the least motion. The nails produce a constantly heightening anguish, while the exposure of so many wounds and lacerations brings on inflammation which in turn, tends to become gangrenous.

In the distended parts of the body, more blood flows through the arteries than can be carried back into the veins: hence too much blood finds its way from the aorta into the head and stomach, and the blood vessels of the head

become pressed and swollen. The general obstruction of circulation which ensues, causes an intense excitement, exertion and constantly mounting anguish. There is not a moment's surcease. The victim experiences a raging thirst.

The midday sun beating down on his face and body heightens his distress. The open wounds bring myriads of flies. We know from Cicero's detailed description that crucifixion was considered the *supplicium crudelissimum*, the most fiendishly cruel punishment, and that one of its most ghastly aspects was the victim's inability to utter the least sound. His voice was completely choked off.

There is not the remotest chance, therefore, that Jesus spoke those moving words to his mother and to John which are recorded in the New Testament. In his weakened condition, the Man of Nazareth expired in a few hours, although other victims were known to have lingered for two or three days, or even longer. The only witnesses of his death were his executioners. His disciples, the New Testament tells us, had *all* fled.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BODY OF JESUS

Jesus has breathed his last. His head hangs helpless on his wasted breast. The glazed eyes stare unseeing at the lengthening shadows on the ground. Never again will they light up with the sacred fire of love. Never again will the Master's voice speak of that "day to come" when night shall be no more, nor tears, nor violence, but justice shall flow like a clear brook of water. Never will his wounded feet tread again the streets of his beloved, far-off Nazareth.

O, bid time return, bring back yesterday!

His lacerated body is taken from the cross at the moment the evening star appears faintly in the eastern sky, and the service at the Temple comes to a close.

The priests recite the last prayers of the day. The same words that Jesus is likely to have whispered with choking breath before losing consciousness, the *Schma Israel*, are repeated in unison by the multitude in the courts of the sanctuary. Attendants are ready to shut the huge brass gates till morning. The crowds are streaming out, more

hurriedly, it seems, than on ordinary days. The priests, Levites and guards charged with the watch, take up their vigil for the night.

A great stillness descends on Jerusalem. It is as if the Milky Way were lowered to earth. The City is like a gleaming white panopticon under the first rays of the crescent moon. All shops are closed. Business has come to a complete standstill. Nobody ventures into the streets. All Jewish families and the hosts of pilgrims in the inns and khans are partaking of the Passover feast. Here and there the heavy measured tread of a Roman patrol is heard on the pavement, a donkey brays, a rooster crows prematurely. For the rest there is silence. In their hourly rounds the watchmen outside the Temple call up to their chief on the walls: *Shalom!* Peace! All is well!

What has become of Jesus' disciples, the last dozen of that band of Galilean partisans who entered the City so boldly and confidently a few weeks earlier? According to the metaphor in Luke's gospel, Satan has sifted them as wheat is sifted by the farmer: they have all fled.

They were still in their Master's company the night before. They had not altogether abandoned hope. When Jesus refused to partake of the wine, he said: When I drink again, it will be in the Kingdom of God. That sounded hopeful. It signified that the messianic era, in spite of appearances to the contrary, would soon be inaugurated. That word gave his companions new courage. As a result, they received the Roman cohort bravely enough in the darkness of the Garden. They resolutely began the battle in which they expected God to come to their aid. But heaven did not intervene. No legions of the celestial host stood guard over their sorely stricken messiah. God abandoned them. The few blows they struck were copiously returned.

Then the last vestige of hope deserted them. Their courage vanished like a whiff of smoke in the wind. They all fled, say Mark and Matthew. With pardonable concern Luke and John correct this awkward text. It would not look well to stamp as cowards and fugitives the disciples who are to become Apostles, pillars and rulers of the church in days to come.

Where did they flee? They probably hid for a few hours in some cave in the Garden where they had hidden so often with their Master. Then they trooped back to Galilee, took up their fishing nets and tried to forget the messianic dream that had turned into a nightmare. When the gospels come to be written seventy, eighty or a hundred years later, these disciples will be brought back to Jerusalem in the imagination of the authors and will be made to play a role in a series of curious and wondrous events connected with the story of Jesus' resurrection.

Now, a few hours after the Master's death, they are invisible; in hiding, or fleeing through the night, bound for the shores of the Sea of Galilee. There is absolute quiet in Jerusalem. The last remnants of the insurrection have been wiped out. Pilate and Claudia and some of their dinner guests may well have gone out on the balcony of the Citadel to watch the marvel of the starry heavens and to breathe the cool air that is blowing from the desert. To the vast majority of the City's population, as to the Procurator, the High Priest, the legionaries and the humblest pilgrim in the synagogues, the day has passed uneventfully.

A few individuals may have accidentally witnessed the scene when a Galilean rebel was led away to be crucified, but the majority is unaware of Jesus' death, as it was oblivious of his existence and identity. The gospels have not been written, and will not be written for a long time.

Nobody seems to have noticed that three hours' darkness which the evangelical account alleges to have spread over the whole earth at the moment when Jesus gave up the ghost. The sun did set that day, to be sure, but not before its time, nor was it eclipsed. Although there must have been a good many persons in Jerusalem not altogether illiterate, no contemporary writer has so much as breathed a word about that gloomy manifestation of nature. Nor did anyone see the curtain before the Holy of Holies in the Temple being torn in twain as by invisible hands when Pontius Pilate's prisoner succumbed on the hill outside the City. Had that happened, the priests on duty in the Temple would have noticed it. The vast multitude assembled for the evening sacrifice would have taken it for a sinister portent and token and might have been seized by panic. A wild stampede might have followed, or would have been prevented only with difficulty. We may be certain that Josephus, for one, would have learned of it, and that he would have recorded the extraordinary occurrence, as he learned of, and recorded nearly everything else that happened in the same period.

But there is more to come. The gospel writers affirm that such a violent earthquake shook Jerusalem and its vicinity when Jesus expired, that the rocks were rent and the graves opened, and "many of the saints which slept arose . . ." and went into the Holy City, "and appeared to many."

That eerie episode was not a topic of conversation at the dinner tables the night of the crucifixion, for the simple reason that nobody had seen it, heard of it, or met any of the resurrected corpses.

The traditional account of what came to pass in the days following Jesus' death, forms one of the most con-

fused and confusing chapters in the whole New Testament. We generally take it for granted that the resurrection took place on the third day, and that the condition of the grave, the surroundings and the discovery of the empty tomb are matters of objective observation by trustworthy eyewitnesses. The gospels themselves give a much more complicated picture.

Two women, says Mark, went to the grave on the first day of the week when the sun had already risen, to do what they could not have done the previous day which was the Sabbath: to place some balm and sweet-smelling spices on or near the Lord's body. How they expected to approach the body which lay in a tomb hewn in the rock with a huge stone rolled in front of it, is not clear. But that difficulty is happily solved by the fact that they find the stone rolled away. The body of Jesus is no longer inside. Instead "a young man dressed in a white robe,"—such was the appearance of an angel in the popular imagination—sits on the right, inside the tomb, and tells the astonished women that the Lord has risen. He warns them to tell his disciples that Jesus has gone to Galilee and that they will see him there.

Matthew has a different story. He says that two saintly women went out on Sunday morning merely to look at the grave. As they come near the tomb another great earthquake takes place. An angel is seen to descend from heaven. He rolls the stone away and sits down on it. The women are seized by fright, but the angel reassures them. They run home, only to meet Jesus in person. It is Jesus who tells them to warn his disciples that he will see them in Galilee.

The third evangelist, Luke, has two angels at the grave which the women find empty. These two angels remind the frightened women of what they do not know, but

which Luke the writer knows seventy years later, namely that Jesus predicted his own crucifixion and resurrection. Luke further intimates that the two women do not believe the miracle.

John's gospel knows nothing about two women. Mary Magdalen is the only one who comes to the grave and finds it empty. She runs back to Jerusalem to warn Peter and John, "the well-beloved disciple." She does not talk of angels and earthquakes. She feels sure that evil-doers have taken the body away. Peter and John come out and verify the disappearance of the body. But they leave the incredulous Mary Magdalen weeping at the grave over what she thinks to have been the theft of the body.

As the Magdalen sits there, she suddenly becomes aware of the presence of two angels inside the tomb. Fleeing from the spectacle, she runs into a man whom she does not recognize at first, "taking him to be the gardener." She complains to him that the body of her Lord has been taken away. The man speaks her name and she recognizes him to be Jesus. In her joy she wants to embrace his knees, but he forbids her and tells her to warn his brethren, not that he is on the way to Galilee, but that he is ascending to heaven.

These are some of the minor divergencies and contradictions in the gospel accounts touching the events immediately following the death of Jesus. It is readily admitted that at first glance these contradictory accounts do not appear to be very serious. Traditionalists have often in the past dismissed their mention by historians as vain casuistry, unnecessary quibbling and, most of all, as quite beside the point. What of it, ask the traditionalists, if the reports of four different authors on the resurrection of Jesus vary somewhat in detail? Isn't that to be expected? Isn't it the

experience of every court of law that two reliable witnesses of the same event differ not only in their interpretation but in their description of it? Isn't that, or something like that, very obviously what has taken place in the resurrection account? One must make due allowances for individual powers of observation and discernment. One evangelist noted one point in particular, the other was struck by an entirely different aspect of the case, and so on. In the final analysis these details are of no importance. It is the main fact that counts. The traditionalist contention is that the four gospel writers, each in a slightly different way, report the fact of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

But that is precisely what the gospels do not do. There is not a single mention of an eyewitness report of the resurrection in the New Testament.

What Matthew, Mark, Luke and John report is the disappearance of the body of Jesus. They inform us that on Sunday morning the tomb was found to be empty. Nothing more!

Now the disappearance of a body is something entirely different from resurrection. The fact that a body has disappeared from its grave does not mean *ipso facto* that it has returned to life. That a certain body has vanished may be readily believed. But that a man once dead, should rise from the grave—on that point most people will remain profoundly skeptical.

This is what the Christian missionaries discovered as soon as they began telling the story of Jesus' resurrection to the crowds of Antioch and Damascus a few decades after his death. Hearing that story, some listeners would easily recognize it as that of Osiris and Hercules and other demi-gods who died and rose. Many shrugged their shoulders or responded to the raconteurs with ribald laughter. To Jews

the story of the resurrection was an offense, to the Greeks it was silly. Did anyone see this matter you are speaking of? the missionaries of the new faith were asked. Who were the eyewitnesses? How did the miracle come about? Do not tell us that angels revealed the circumstances to you, for their testimony is, like their appearance, highly problematical, to say the least. The empty tomb explains nothing.

The gospel authors, as can plainly be seen and felt in reading the New Testament text, were at their wits' end. Somehow or other the account of the resurrection had to be authenticated with something more substantial and plausible than the word of an angel fluttering around an empty grave. The strange account of the hysterical Mary Magdalen of having seen and spoken to the Lord was not very convincing either, inasmuch as Jesus in his lifetime was said to have cast seven devils out of her, *i.e.* that he had cured her of hallucinations and nervous disorders. New evidence, better proof had to be adduced. If eyewitnesses did not exist, they had to be invented.

And invented they were! But in doing so the Greek gospel writers took a fearful revenge on the Jewish people. They laid the basis—not unwittingly—for that Christian anti-Semitism which has caused the Jews to be driven as outcasts from pillar to post for eighteen hundred years, leaving a trail of blood in nearly every Christian land they traversed.

The texts are there to prove that the gospel writers involved the whole Jewish people in the death of Jesus in order to produce witnesses of the resurrection.

The correct explanation of what happened to the body of Jesus circulated freely in Jerusalem in the days immediately following his gruesome death. It has been

preserved for us in the account given by Matthew. It was to the effect that some of Jesus' devoted friends removed the body in the night and buried it in a secret place.

Why should they have done this? Wasn't the body safe where it lay with a detachment of Roman legionaries standing guard over it? How did the disciples manage to get near the remains of their beloved Master with armed troops present to prevent them? Was there a fight with the Romans over it?

~~Nothing of the sort. The truth of the matter is that~~ there was no guard, because Jesus was not buried in the family tomb located in a garden belonging to a certain Joseph of Arimathea.

The Galilean's body lay in a charnel pit near the hillock of Golgotha, known as "the place of skulls," where the Roman soldiers customarily tossed the corpses of executed criminals.

Had anyone asked, after Jesus' death, for the privilege of taking the body away and giving it a decent burial, such a request would have been granted. But nobody came. None of Jesus' friends and partisans dared to show his face in daylight. All of his companions, the gospels tell us, had fled.

How about Joseph of Arimathea, then? Is it not written of him that he asked Pilate for the right to remove the body, and did he not lay Jesus in a new grave hewn in the rock?

The story of Joseph of Arimathea was invented and introduced into the text at a time when Jesus was already glorified as the Christ, and when the evangelists were anxious to eliminate as much as possible of the sordid and horrid details of his trial, his execution and his common criminal's death.

Yet the compilers of our gospel story, who lived in

different parts of Asia and Europe, had—except for the fourth evangelist—a common brief text of the life and death of Jesus before them, the so-called Ur-Marcus, plus a brief collection of *logia*, so-called “sayings” of the Lord. These works, which have long since been lost (and for a good reason, inasmuch as the Church had no interest in preserving them), could not very well ignore the simple explanation of the disappearance of Jesus’ body given in the Ur-Marcus. For that explanation makes a banal fiction of the resurrection.

Moreover, the facts were known. Matthew admits that there was no secret about the disappearance of Jesus’ body. He writes that “a rumor” about the nocturnal abstraction of Jesus’ body by the master’s own disciples, “is current among the Jews until this day.”

What to do with that “rumor”? If that rumor, which was, of course, the truth, should gain general currency, the story of the resurrection would be robbed of all credibility. The resurrection would not stand up a minute with any man of common sense. The fraud would be palpable, a crude and fantastic concoction in the over-excited brains of a handful of illuminati.

In order to save the resurrection story, the “rumor” was declared to be a rumor, that is to say false. The Jews were saddled with the blame.

And here, in truth, lies the basis of the “crime” for which the Jewish people have paid so heavy a price throughout the ages of Christian civilization.

The crime was not the crucifixion. Jews were not responsible for that. The crucifixion was not then, right after Jesus’ death, nor for a long time to come, a matter of reproach to the Jewish people. It could not be. If the Christian doctrine makers were consistent in their argu-

ment that Jesus was the Christ, God's only son, who was destined, in accordance with a divine plan laid down before the creation of the world, to abandon his heavenly glory and to descend to earth in order to serve as the saving victim for the expiation of the world's sins, then the Jews, if they immolated that victim, merely acted in the capacity of God's agents, so to speak, in carrying out the divine scheme of salvation. No blame could be attached to them for that. Under that plan the Jews were in fact a highly privileged, chosen people, who, albeit unwittingly, participated in mankind's redemption by the shedding of the divine victim's blood. No Jew, moreover, denied the historic fact of Jesus' death by execution at the hands of the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate.

What Jews did deny, when controversies broke out a hundred years after Jesus' death, was the resurrection. It was in their power to refute the resurrection story by telling the truth about the abstraction of Jesus' body by his own disciples. If they mentioned that fact they struck at the very heart of the Christian faith which was laboriously establishing itself. For without the resurrection, the Christian faith is vain, utterly foolish, as St. Paul points out in one of his Epistles. The Christian system of dogma is not built upon the life and death of Jesus, but upon the myth of the resurrection. Without the resurrection Jesus is not only not divine; he can even be regarded as one of the many frustrated messiahs who rose and went under in the period which coincides with the existence of the second Temple in Jerusalem.

To prevent the Jews from speaking the truth, the gospel writers disqualified them *a priori* as untrustworthy witnesses, as liars from the beginning, as perverse criminals from whom anything, any crime could be expected.

See how the truth was obscured and the facts in the matter of Jesus' death and the disposal of his body, perverted to suit the diffusion of a myth, a pagan doctrine.

First was introduced the figure of a Sanhedrist, a Jewish doctor of the Sacred Law to whom was given the name of Joseph of Arimathea. This person is represented as asking Pilate for the privilege of interring the body of the crucified Galilean in a brand-new rock grave located in his own garden.

Next the evangelists have Pilate put a guard of soldiers at the burial ground. Pilate does this, o irony, at the request of the wicked Jews. The Jews, forsooth, have got wind of a rumor that Jesus talked in his lifetime about rising from the dead on the third day. How "the Jews" should have come by that foreknowledge when Jesus' closest friends, who were also Jews, of course, are shown to be utterly confused, astounded and incredulous on resurrection morning, is one of the minor mysteries in the whole phantasmagoria.

The soldiers are made to fall on their faces, as they should, on Sunday morning when the earthquake occurs, and the angel descends who rolls away the stone from the tomb to enable the revived Jesus to leave the grave.

This is important, for at last there are now some actual eyewitnesses of the resurrection: the detachment of Roman legionaries. But they are embarrassing witnesses.

The evangelical fabrication becomes more and more absurd. According to Matthew's gospel, the soldiers run off to report the amazing spectacle they have just witnessed, not to Pontius Pilate, their commander-in-chief, or to one of his lieutenants, but to "the chief priests and elders of the Jews."

By a stroke of the evangelical pen, the Jewish digni-

taries are now also involved in the resurrection. They become witnesses by association, second-hand witnesses. They are the first to receive the eyewitness account of the resurrection from the Roman soldiers.

What do the Jewish dignitaries do with the soldiers' story at dawn on Sunday morning?

They pay the soldiers a large sum of money to keep the resurrection to themselves.

The poor plot thickens. The anti-Semitic evangelist who concocts the story bethinks himself in writing it down, that the reader might accuse the soldiers of dereliction of duty. Were they not expressly assigned to the garden to see that the tomb holding the body of Jesus should remain undisturbed? How is the evangelical writer to get around this new difficulty of his own creation? Conceivably, the imaginary soldiers might blurt out their story despite the no less imaginary hush money. After all, seeing a dead man walk out of his grave amidst the rumbling of an earthquake and in the presence of an angel from heaven, is not an everyday affair. The evangelist is caught in his own trap. Suppose one of the Romans, on some dull day when there is nothing else to report from Palestine, should write his mother in Neapolis or in Brundisium about this rather remarkable incident . . . or if he should draft an anonymous letter? Heavens, then everybody will know about the resurrection! But isn't that what the evangelist wants?

No, he does not want that. He would rather have the soldiers tell another lie. When asked about the imaginary events in the imaginary garden of the imaginary Joseph of Arimathea, the soldiers should say—at the suggestion of the lying Jewish priests, of course—that they fell asleep at their post, and that—mark this well, for here comes the greatest inconsistency—while they were slumbering, the friends of Jesus came and snatched the body away.

How could those soldiers see Jesus' friends roll away the stone and carry off the dead body if they, the soldiers, were asleep? And wasn't that body-snatching episode precisely what the evangelist wanted to brand as a vile rumor, a false report, a lie?

Let whoever can, find his way in the dark labyrinth of the resurrection accounts. Surely the New Testament writers can shed no light on the subject. They heap confusion on improbability, and magic on the supernatural. The more they write, the more they tie themselves in a knot, until it may well be said that the gospels themselves make belief in the resurrection impossible.

It is quite evident from the self-contradictory reports that at the time the gospels were composed, the nascent Christian church was involved in an acrimonious controversy concerning the empty tomb. The faithful, or rather the prospective faithful, did not know whom or what version or tradition to believe.

Faced with a demand to supply more authentic data than the language of faith and inspiration could supply, the early Church, which produced our gospels, added forty days to Jesus' life, and filled these forty days with a series of apparitions and miracles even more incredible than the stories of the Lord's emergence from the grave which his own closest disciples had refused to believe. For, when Mary Magdalen returned from the burial ground and told the eleven—that is to say the twelve disciples minus Judas Iscariot—of her experience, of seeing the tomb empty and of speaking to Jesus, Mark's gospel tells us that they did not rejoice or exclaim that prophecy had been fulfilled. "They mourned and wept." And further, "when they had heard he was alive, and had been seen of her, they believed not."

These eleven, it should be borne in mind, included the two chief disciples John and Peter, who are elsewhere described as having gone to the grave themselves and having seen as much as Mary Magdalen saw. Afterwards, in one of his appearances, Jesus is made to reproach them for their unbelief.

In spite of the traditionalist assertion that the resurrection is "the most solidly authenticated fact in history," it must be said that belief in the resurrection is not based on any verifiable historical event. There were no eyewitnesses. The New Testament authors do not produce a single man or woman who saw Jesus leaving his grave on that fateful Easter morning. All the reported curious and improbable circumstances surrounding the discovery of the empty tomb are concoctions and fabrications from the whole cloth.

But these fantastic accounts are not the work of any contemporary of Jesus. They were put down in writing long after the last men and women who had personally known the Galilean carpenter had been lowered into their tombs.

The resurrection accounts in the New Testament were written in the third generation after Jesus' death by missionary apologists who sought to fill a crying need for a more or less factual and plausible basis to the belief in the resurrection which had spread far and wide in the Near East of their day.

For the belief in the resurrection existed first. The stories as to how the miracle had come about appeared much later. Before these stories were recorded there lived a man named St. Paul. He wrote certain epistles to some newly-formed Christian congregations in Asia Minor. These

epistles do not say anything about a man named Jesus of Nazareth, that is, about a living, breathing man, a creature of flesh and blood. Nor does St. Paul care a fig about such a person. When St. Paul, or the authors of the epistles that bear his name, refer to Christ, they have in mind a metaphysical personage, a divine hero on the Greek model who, like Hercules in the description by Seneca, is called the Son of God.

Here is Seneca's drama of *Hercules Oetaeus* in brief, as summarized by Dr. G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga in his *Pre-Christian Christ*. The hero, Hercules, like Jesus, appears on earth in human form to suffer for mankind. He accepts death voluntarily in order to be elevated to a place in heaven on the right hand side of God the Father. Although he is, like the Christ of St. Paul, fully entitled to remain in heaven, he gives up his glory and the company of the immortal gods. On earth, like Jesus, he walks a road of bitterest sorrows. In this manner he wins his way back to the stars. Like Jesus, who is made to wash the feet of his disciples, Hercules humbles himself by assuming the role of a menial servant, so that there may be peace on earth. During his sojourn among mortals, he retains his divine character, but as a human being he is, like the dual-natured Christ of St. Paul and of our creeds, subject to the laws of all flesh.

Like Jesus he gladly makes the sacrifice of his life. Although abandoned by all his friends, again like Jesus, he suffers in silence and endures the most outrageous treatment without uttering a word of complaint. When he calls for water, like Jesus, his prayer is not answered. But he speaks encouragingly to his unhappy mother who is the witness of his suffering and calls out: "Thy son liveth!"

Hearing the voice of his heavenly father, the divine

son Hercules groans in death's anguish. "Take thou my spirit in thy hands," as Jesus is made to say: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Nature enters into Seneca's tragedy, as it does in the gospel story, when God causes darkness to fall on the earth amidst the rumble of thunder. At last Hercules calls out: "*Consummatum est!*"—It is finished, or accomplished!—and thus renders up the ghost with the exact words put in the mouth of the dying Jesus by the writer of the fourth gospel.

Seneca says that all things are thereafter subject to Hercules, just as St. Paul says that to the risen Christ Jesus is given all power in heaven and on earth.

The two accounts, that of the gospel writers, who got it from St. Paul or from the theologians of the Pauline school, and on the other hand Seneca's drama, bear so many similarities and correspond in so many intimate particulars that their common origin cannot be doubted.

The gospel writers, who came after St. Paul, took up where he left off. The metaphysical, highly speculative idea of a savior-god of which St. Paul spoke and wrote, was not attractive to the masses. It differed too little from the mold in which presentations of other, older, Hellenist, Egyptian and Persian savior-gods were cast. The people wanted something more tangible, something more accessible and real. They were tired of the old gods. The people asked: what name did the Christ-god have when he dwelt on earth, what manner of man was he, who were his parents, and how is it that such a noble and disinterested figure who went around doing good, healing diseases, and speaking words of love and comfort to all, should have been put to death?

The gospel writers answered these questions by making a human being of St. Paul's Christ-god. They did not make

a god of Jesus, as is often said; the process worked in a reverse direction. They made a human being of a god who already existed. Christianity is much older than the Christian Church. To this half-human being, half-god they gave the name once borne by Jesus of Nazareth.

They knew pitifully little about the real Jesus. He had lived and died in a strange country, in Palestine, a good half century or more before. They knew his father's name had been Joseph and his mother's Mary. They knew that Joseph had been a carpenter and that Jesus had set out as a preacher of a new dispensation. They knew vaguely that he got mixed up with a political movement to liberate his fatherland from Roman oppression, and that he went under in the struggle, executed by the Procurator Pontius Pilate. They also knew that he was seen after his death, and that upon his final ascent to heaven he had promised to come again to finish the task which his death had interrupted. Much more they did not know.

It was no easy task to reconstruct the life of the Christ Jesus. But it had to be done. Lacking objective data, the sacred authors fitted Jesus of Nazareth into the philosophical conceptions which St. Paul had thought out. They clothed the Christ-god of St. Paul with a human semblance. Words and deeds spoken and done by Jesus of Nazareth were attributed to the Christ-god. Ideas propagated by the Christ-god of St. Paul were attributed to Jesus of Nazareth. The two, the human being Jesus and the metaphysical personage Christ, were blended into one. To Jesus' name was added the affix *Christ*. Jesus and Christ were made one and the same being.

For many of the details of the life of this Jesus Christ the gospel writers went to the Old Testament where there is frequent mention of a Suffering Servant of God. Things

said by and prophesied about this Suffering Servant were applied to Jesus, made to have been said and done and undergone by the composite creature, half-divine and half-human, known as Jesus Christ. The Jews were made the culprits in the dramatic events in the fictionalized life and death of the savior-god Jesus-Christ. Why? Because the Jews were the witnesses of the real life of Jesus. They could have denied, had they chosen to do so, that there had been anything extraordinary, let alone divine, about the words and deeds of the carpenter's son from Nazareth.

The Christian religion preached by St. Paul and the Judeo-Hellenist school of his time, from which issued the gospels as we know them, is not the legitimate daughter of Judaism, but a pagan mythology dressed in a quasi-historical costume. It embodies a number of pagan, as distinct from Jewish, concepts, grouped around the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Jesus of the gospels is made to reject the oath, as the Pythagoreans did. He is made to imitate the Greek philosopher Antisthenes when he suggests that one must at all times be ready to forgive one's brother. When Diogenes asks Antisthenes for a coat, the latter gives him a cloak in the bargain, as Jesus is made to do. Some Stoics, like Jesus, had urged that one must love one's enemies as well as one's friends. The school of philosophy known as that of the Cynics, glorified poverty as does the evangelical Jesus. The famous Dutch savant, G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, has traced the so-called eschatological sayings of Jesus, his words concerning the last judgment (*eschata* means literally last things), almost word for word and point by point, to Hellenistic astrological literature. Dr. Eysinga denies that

Jesus ever existed: everything related to him is a myth and borrowed from Hellenism.

In the Hellenistic religious cults, this scholar points out, all men are deemed sinners and miserable offenders who can be saved only by a divine victim who sheds his blood for their sake. They are all on the lookout for a divine mediator between God and man. Hellenistic belief, like the Christian gospels, makes this savior descend from heaven. He cures diseases, expels evil spirits and raises the dead. In the Hellenistic cults, baptism was practiced for the expulsion of devils, as in evangelical Christianity it was a symbolical cleansing from sin. By his death the divine mediator of Hellenism defeats the evil powers who keep mankind in thrall. By the sacrament of communion, the divine mediator and man become one. Man is born again, and sanctified. Whoever reaches this stage of moral perfection is called a soldier of the god, as the Christian neophytes are called when they are initiated into the Militia of Christ.

Most striking and inescapable is the similarity in the celebration of the supreme sacramental rites in the religions of Mithra and Attis with those of Christianity. The Mithraists had a communion service in which believers ate the flesh and drank the blood of a bull symbolizing the body of the god Mithra. The consumption of the flesh and blood gave the followers of Mithra strength to withstand evil and combat iniquitous powers hovering in the air. Like the Christians, the Mithraists were called the children of light and the non-Mithraists, children of darkness.

To sum up: when Jesus died, his body, like that of any other criminal executed by the Romans, was thrown into the ditch by the side of Golgotha, "the hill of skulls." In the

night that followed, some of his friends who had escaped the Procurator's dragnet, ventured from their hiding place, easily located the body and gave it a secret burial. Then they left for Galilee to join the others of the Master's messianist companions who had fled.

It was in Galilee, according to the oldest tradition, and not in Jerusalem, that the first post mortem appearances of Jesus occurred. The story of having seen the Lord after his death, as told by Peter, and perhaps by some others, gained wider currency as time went on. In fact, the subject of the Lord's resurrection became the pivot of the faith, but only, of course, in a very restricted circle, amongst Galilean fishers and peasants and others of "the poor in Israel."

Standing alone as the apparition of a ghost, the story carried little conviction when told outside the immediate environment of the Lord's former companions. Moreover, Peter's strange account circulated largely *in petto* at first, in more or less private gatherings. It was treated as a grave and precious secret to be shared only by the Master's former friends and intimates. For fear of the contemptuous ridicule of public opinion, the followers of Jesus scarcely dared to come out in the open with the account of the Lord having been seen after death. In Jerusalem too many persons knew the actual circumstances of Jesus' last days and the facts concerning the disposal of his body.

In the course of time, however, belief in Peter's account (of having seen the Risen Lord) made much more headway outside Palestine. To the Jews, half-Jews and apostate Jews in the Diaspora, the myth of a divine hero who dies but rises from the dead, did not sound as unfamiliar and repugnant as it did to orthodox Jews in Jerusalem. The Diaspora Jews could hear of similar myths every day from their pagan Hellenist neighbors.

Jesus was dead at least forty or fifty years when the first written accounts of his life, death and resurrection began to circulate. These appeared not in Palestine, but in Asia Minor. These writings are not the gospels as we know them. The gospels, as we know them, are enlargements and emendations of these earlier scripts which have, of course, all been lost.

In Jerusalem and Palestine as a whole, these earlier accounts must have come as an enormous surprise. In these scripts Jesus appeared in a totally new light. Even in circles where his memory was still cherished, the imported picture of Jesus as a Christ and Saviour must have seemed altogether unfamiliar. Such details, too, as the burial of the Lord in a garden belonging to one Joseph of Arimathea were absolutely new to the surviving friends of the Nazarene in Jerusalem.

The writers in Asia Minor had drawn heavily on the Old Testament for a reconstruction of the Lord's life. For instance, in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which deals with the vicissitudes of the mysterious Suffering Servant of Yahveh, they had found sufficient material to concoct an almost complete biography of Jesus. That Suffering Servant is declared by Isaiah to have been "wounded for our transgressions," to have been "dumb as a sheep before his shearers," to have been "with the rich in his death."

The present-day unwary reader, comparing the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah with the gospel accounts, cannot fail to be struck by the element of fulfillment. The role of the Christ-savior of the gospels conforms rather closely with what Isaiah wrote centuries before about the Suffering Servant. But there is no fulfillment here. There is adaptation and insertion and superimposition of the contents of an ancient document on the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

In Isaiah's statement that "he was with the rich in his death," lies the origin of the story of the burial of Jesus in a garden belonging to Joseph of Arimathea.

Naturally, when these written accounts of Jesus' life and death made their appearance in Jerusalem, they created a scandal. Controversies broke out. Jewish scribes, who well recalled the days when Jesus, according to these proto-gospels, was said to have performed his miracles and mighty deeds, indignantly rejected the records imported from abroad. Letters were written by the Jerusalem scribes to the synagogues abroad protesting the allegations made about Jesus of Nazareth. Jews in Asia Minor were warned by pamphlets and oral messages that the stories had no foundation in fact, that some of the accounts, as that of the resurrection, were pure invention.

The existence of this vast polemical literature is certified by St. Eusebius. That writer asserts that he knew from "an indisputable source" that the "priests and elders of Jerusalem" composed many documents "concerning the life and death of Jesus" which they sent to the dispersed Jews who were subjected to the propaganda of the missionaries. All that polemical literature has disappeared. The Church destroyed it. The actual witnesses of Jesus' time were silenced forever.* Worse, they were, in subsequent editions of the gospels, discredited by being made the accessories to and the actual culprits in the Lord's death. The trial before the Sanhedrin, which did not appear in the first editions, was invented and inserted in the subsequent versions which have come down to us. In that way Jewish testimony was made invalid for all time.

On the other hand, the makers and defenders of the Christ-myth allege that the story came "to the saints," *i.e.* the gospel writers, by revelation and by inspiration. The

* See p. 282, Note 1.

simple fact is that the Christ-dogma was not held or taught by the primitive Nazarenes, the authentic followers of Jesus, and that its growth was a process perfectly intelligible, requiring no supernatural interference.

When the disciples were seized by panic upon Jesus' arrest and execution and fled back to the safety of Galilee, there to take up once more their old occupations as fishermen, laborers and peasants and to efface as quickly as possible the memory and consequences of the abortive messianic venture in which they had participated in Jerusalem, there was one man who could not forget the Master's words and the Master's face. That man was Simon bar Yona, whom the Church Father Eusebius identifies as a first cousin of Jesus. We know him as Peter, or by his Hebrew name Kephas, which means rock. Peter was unshaken and unshakeable in his devotion to the dead Nazarene's ideals. He could not and would not believe that the cruel cross on Calvary's hill was the end of the grandiose enterprise Jesus had initiated.

Peter was the most tumultuous and determined of the revolutionary partisans who attached themselves to Jesus when he set out on his mission of announcing the speedy advent of the Kingdom of God. Jesus, it might be said, was the preacher, the tactician of the movement which had as its principal object the ousting of the Romans, and the institution of a theocracy in God's City of Jerusalem. Peter was the animator, the most enthusiastic proponent of the project to stage a raid on the Roman stronghold and citadel of Jewish conservatism. He had encouraged Jesus by his example and inspiration. Time and again he had calmed the Master's fears and apprehensions, and had laughed away his

skepticism. When Jesus doubted the success of the plan, Peter said to him: But I say to you, you are the messiah, you are the one to lead us to victory and to liberate our nation from the hand of the unspeakable heathen. It is God Himself who tells me with insistent voice.

Then Jesus was quieted in spirit.

—Not flesh and blood, Jesus replied, no human being has disclosed this secret to you [the secret of his messiahship] but the Father who is in heaven.

To Peter the capture of the Temple area and the fortress had seemed not only feasible, but relatively easy. Wasn't it God's will? Surely God would not forsake His own who went forth to battle for Him, and who planned to restore God's reign over the land and the world?

To Peter it was merely a question of putting a bold face on things, merely a matter of leading the way for others to follow. In his fevered brain it seemed a foregone conclusion that tens of thousands of valiant men would take up the struggle with the Roman usurper and seize the opportunity to deal him a mortal blow. A vast multitude would be swept along in an avalanche of patriotic religious fervor once it got under way. Besides the mass of water carriers and hewers of wood, camel drivers, hucksters and other simple folk, all devoted to Israel's national cause, an army of Galileans would be in Jerusalem at Passover. They could be counted upon to rise. They were pledged to rise. Hadn't they all sworn the oath: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither away!* What, then, was there to fear? Who could prevent the plan from being carried out?

So reasoned Peter, and so, half-heartedly, thought Jesus. In the end Jesus had agreed to everything except violence. But Pilate struck like a bolt from the blue. There

was treason in the Galilean camp. An informer had insinuated himself into the Master's good graces and friendship. Someone disclosed the nocturnal hiding ground and assembly place of the northern partisans to the Procurator. Pilate nipped the conspiracy in the bud. He sent his men to the olive groves at midnight. The legionaries showed no mercy. God did not intervene. The mass of the people remained indifferent. Jesus was easily taken. The same day he was crucified. The struggle was over.

But was it really? How could it be? Peter would never admit defeat. His confidence in the ultimate triumph of justice was returning. Didn't God want His Kingdom restored? No, more likely it was the Evil One, Satan, in his eternal conflict with God, who had frustrated Jesus' plan. . . . Ah, the dead Master! Was he really dead? Did they nail him to that cross? Didn't he manage to escape at the last moment?

Peter had not witnessed the crucifixion. The last time he saw Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, by the light of the torches and lanterns the cohort carried. The whole dreadful scene came back before his mind. Again and again he saw the Master's dark and reproachful eyes. How ghastly he looked, the blood streaked over his pale face! How cruelly he was suffering! But how nobly and fearlessly did he rise to the occasion when they called on him to surrender! That was the Jesus Peter would always remember, the Jesus who, seeing his companions in danger of being cut down, had sacrificed himself by giving himself up, and thus ending the battle. . . . "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Peter wept when he thought of that last night. He bitterly reproached himself for his cowardice, his desertion, his betrayal and forsaking the Master in the hour of danger.

Why hadn't he stood up and fought to the bitter end? What if he should have gone down in the struggle by Jesus' side? Life without Jesus wasn't worth living anyway. He realized that now. His sorrow was immeasurable, too deep for words. Regret choked his voice. Yes, it was he who had betrayed the Master! He, by his pusillanimous behavior, had caused the messiah to be handed over. He had even denied knowing Jesus when questioned by a roving patrol and taxed with speaking the same dialect that Jesus spoke. How could he ever atone for his abominable weaknesses? Would Jesus forgive him? If only he could see Jesus once more, but an hour, but an instant, and speak to him one more word!

But that could never be. Jesus was gone, never to return. His body must even now be moldering. . . . Yes, here was the place where he loved to walk and sit, here by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. To Peter the very air was perfumed with reminiscences of the beloved Master. At every turn of the path along the shore a nostalgic pang shot through his heart. Every object, every footstep made him think of Jesus. He could not put the Master out of his mind. Over there he had stood once, under that knotted cypress tree, near that pile of nets. How lovely did he look then, how full of grace! How wise were his words! It was early morning then. From the trees came the sharp smell of pine and eucalyptus. Wraiths of white mist, even as now, moved fitfully over the surface of the water and blew off into the forest. It was like the Spirit of God brooding and hovering over the waters at the beginning of time.

A spirit? What? Peter cannot believe his own eyes. It seems as if someone has just disappeared behind that clump of shrubbery. Who was it? Didn't it feel as if someone walked past noiselessly, and brushed against him ever so lightly? Wasn't there a breath that fanned his cheek,

a touch on his shoulder? Who could it have been but Jesus!

Jesus! *Rabbouni!* Master! Is it you? Where are you? Speak! The echo of his own words travels back to Peter over the water.

Then there is stillness again. The first rays of the rising sun illumine with golden light the snow on Mount Hermon. From the distance come the twittering and chirping of the waking birds.

Peter sinks to the ground and buries his face in his hands. His strong frame shakes with sobs. Tears of joy flow down his rugged face. How good it was to feel oneself once more in the presence of the beloved one. How blessed an experience! Jesus had not forgotten him. He had come back. He had been near, very near. . . . He is still near. Peter feels his presence. Jesus will always be near. Peter will carry Jesus in his heart till the end, until at last in the Father's house with its many mansions he will again see him face to face.

Peter feels calm, reassured. He knows that Jesus has forgiven him for his cowardice and denial and desertion and the insane urgings and promptings that started them on the road to Jerusalem and disaster. Peter will make amends. He will take up the Master's task and go to Jerusalem, to die if need be. . . . The Kingdom of God is still at hand. Peter will be its announcer and builder in Jesus' place. . . .

X "One day," so writes the scholar G. G. Coulton in his autobiography *Fourscore Years*, "the flickering cloud shadows in chequered weather [passing through an attic room in his ancestral home] assumed a special significance. I was alone, very possibly with a bad conscience, but certainly I had a hallucination optically clear and distinct, though

psychologically far more vague. A black shadow passing slowly over the chimney curtain seemed like an exact silhouette portrait of Satan as depicted in *Pilgrim's Progress* and other similar sources. It lasted, of course, for less than a second; so that the mind could not so much say, 'that is distinct,' as 'that *was* distinct.' Still, with this modification, distinct it was, and carried conviction. It scared me at the moment, and made me shy of going alone again into the room for a little time; but not, I think, for long. . . ."

Isn't that the kind of vision Peter had: "clear and distinct," and "convincing"?

When Jesus' friends, slowly and timidly, gathered in Galilee after the Passover catastrophe in Jerusalem, they first whispered and then talked louder and louder of their memories of the Master. The memories became more vivid as time went on.

—Do you remember how he looked? Do you recall what he said on this, that and the other occasion? . . . How profoundly he understood the signs of the times! How wise he was, and how good he was! How he loved us! . . . And the miracles he performed! . . . Do you remember the boy from whom he expelled a devil, and the woman he cured of hysteria? . . . Surely, he was one of God's elect, His messenger! . . .

—Oh, that he had to die! He was too great, too noble to die!

—But did he really die? Do you believe he died?

—He died, but he rose again. Peter saw him! . . .

—Then he isn't dead! He rose! He lives! He lives! . . .

After a time the death of Jesus, which none of his disciples had witnessed, sank into oblivion; but his words were more and more vividly remembered and the story of his return became more convincing. Then happened what

had to happen to these people, to whom miracles and visions were everyday occurrences: the Lord appeared unto them.

—Peter has seen him, but I too! It's true, I saw him only for an instant, but I did recognize him. It was he, I am certain of it. I saw him quite distinctly. There can be no mistake! . . .

—And to me, he also appeared! One night on the road, I am certain, he walked with me. I heard his footsteps. I felt him behind me!

—I, too, saw him! I, too! I, too! Jesus lives! Jesus lives! . . .

Thus was born the belief in the resurrection, as naturally as a child is born. This belief was the operation of the strong impression Jesus' beloved personality made on his credulous and faithful friends.

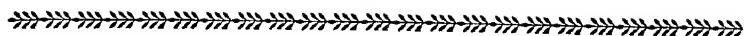
At the bottom of their visions lies the experience of Peter by the shore of the Sea of Galilee. That is the foundation rock of the belief in the resurrection. The other apparitions of the Risen Lord are mere additions to bolster up the case. If one looks carefully, one sees that Peter's testimony is the only one that counts. What Peter said was beyond dispute; nobody doubted it.

When taxed by unbelievers with the reappearance of their Lord, the early Christians never said that he had been seen by John, by Mary Magdalen, by Thomas, or by the other apostles, or by the five hundred in a back room in Jerusalem's slum quarter. That was no proof. Proof alone and incontestable was: "He was seen of Kephas [Peter]!" Peter's testimony was unchallengeable. Paul, who lived far away in Tarsus, repeated it over and over again in his epistles to the churches of Asia: "He was seen by Peter!"

The testimony of Peter is the foundation stone of the

Christian faith. That is why the Church Triumphant dedicated its greatest temple in Rome to the name and memory of St. Peter. Eighty-four golden lamps hang above the tomb of the poor fisherman from Galilee. Inscribed in gold on the borders of Bramante's dome, in letters six feet high, both in Latin and Greek, stands the proclamation to the whole world: "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church. . . ."

These are not the words of Jesus of Nazareth, for he knew not what a church was, and he did not intend to found one. These are the words of a victorious Christianity based on Peter's witnessing of the resurrection.



PART 3

WHY JESUS DIED

THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS AFTER JESUS

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in the year 70 did not, as is sometimes said, put an end to the Jewish people's national existence on their own soil. True it is that a million Jews perished in the struggle with Rome and that tens of thousands were sold in the slave markets of Egypt and Tarentum. Other thousands were sacrificed in the gladiatorial games arranged by the victorious legions in Damascus, Tyre, Antioch and other cities on the triumphal march back to Italy.

True it is also that little but ruins remained of the Holy City. Only three of its seven gates and a portion of the wall were left standing as monuments to Jerusalem's former splendor, and to the prowess of Roman arms. The great Temple on Mount Zion lay in ashes. God's altars were broken, the priests were slain or scattered, the sacred vessels were carried off, the ceremonial cultus suspended, never to be resumed.

But the rabbinical schools moved to the small town of Yabneh. The study of Torah, Israel's life-task, was never

interrupted. The national life went on. With an almost pathetic faithfulness the remnants of the nation gathered around the teachers of the Sacred Law. Records of the past were collected and rewritten. The assembling and editing of the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds went on steadily. The hope of national restoration was never extinguished. The creative faculties of Judaism did not dry up with Jesus' death, despite what Christian theologians have alleged for centuries and allege today. The tree did not wither, nor has it ceased to bear fruit. From Yabneh, Israel started on that pilgrimage which was to terminate in the fullness of time, in our own day, when the parliament of Israel met in Jerusalem after an interval of eighteen centuries, and the civilization of Judaism began to function once more in its own home, in the area where once it reached the apex of its endeavors.

Four years after the departure of Titus, bands of Zealots and guerrillas were still fighting in the Galilean and Lebanese hills, in the Negeb desert and in Transjordan. Hardly had one region been subdued, when another erupted. The Jews went on fighting wherever the Romans showed themselves. They ambushed their supply columns. They set their blockhouses on fire. They destroyed the water supply of conquered cities.

Witnesses of the battles fought at Herodium and Machaerus report the Jews impetuous and death-defying in attack. In coolness under murderous assault they surpassed the Spartan defenders of Thermopylae. Isolated garrisons resisted until the last morsel of food was eaten and the last means of defense exhausted. In the rock fortress of Masada, the members of the garrison, seeing the hopelessness of their situation, first slew their own wives and children and then killed each other, so that when the men of the Fretensis Legion, who led the assault, entered the

stronghold, they shrank back in horrified amazement before the piles of corpses.

It is known that the rebellion which Titus suppressed, flared up half a dozen times in different parts of the country, and that in the year 81, a decade after the fall of Jerusalem, the land of Palestine was far from pacified.

Sixty-two years after the capture of the Holy City, in A.D. 132, the Jewish people, still living on their own soil, still had the strength to rise in so terrible a revolt that the Roman Empire was shaken to its very foundations.

Some historians would have it that about the year 126, the Emperor Hadrian granted permission to the Jews to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem, but that the Samaritans made representations in Rome against the enterprise. Probably on the secret advice of his "state department," the Emperor is said to have repented of his pledge and to have canceled it.

A more likely version of the origins of the last great revolt is that the Jews, without waiting for the Emperor's permission, had filtered back into the Holy City and were actively laying plans of their own for rebuilding the Temple. They were probably at work on clearing the foundations when Hadrian, upon learning of their action, ordered that the edifice they had started, should be dedicated to Jupiter Capitolinus. This order was one of the worst blows ever dealt the Jewish people by Rome. It brought to the boiling point the resentment against an imperial rescript prohibiting the practice of circumcision which had been issued not long before.

So long as Jerusalem lay in ruins, the Jews could cherish hope of its restoration. The erection of a heathen temple on the site of the holy hill chosen by Yahveh as His own dwelling place, dashed these hopes forever. Hadrian's

decision outraged the Jews' most sacred aspirations and profaned their innermost convictions. It was answered, as such actions should always be answered, by a general uprising.

A man named Bar Kochba was the leader of the revolt, which spread rapidly over Palestine. Men gathered in caves, in subterranean passages, in the forests, in strongholds, in desert hide-outs and mountain retreats to carry out devastating attacks on the Roman camps and strong places. Their slogan was: *Lacherut Yerushelaim*, For the Freedom of Jerusalem.

The revolt took Tinnius Rufus, who was governor of Judea at the time, completely by surprise. He was defeated by the rebels and forced to flee into Syria. In that country he joined forces with Publius Marcellus, the commander of the legions stationed there. Together the two commanders returned to Palestine for a counterattack, only to be thrown back in confusion at the borders of Galilee.

Bar Kochba's principal error in strategy was committed at the beginning of the campaign when he failed to take advantage of his initial victory by not pursuing the enemy into Lebanon, where he would undoubtedly have found considerable support.

For not only in that land, but everywhere in the Roman world, the spark of revolt was smoldering. Dissident elements in Syria, lovers of freedom, soldiers of fortune, runaway slaves, but above all Jews from the Diaspora streamed into Palestine to support the Jewish liberator. News of the success of the rebels spread as far abroad as the forests of Germany and the mist-shrouded habitations of the Batavi and Frisians. Bar Kochba's revolt raised the hopes of the conquered tribes of Scythia and Persia. The Macedonians rose. The Gauls mobilized anew. Everywhere the captive peoples stirred uneasily. "The whole world,"

says Dio Cassius, "was in commotion." The cry of joy, later to be raised by the Christian sects at the collapse of the Empire: "She is fallen, she is fallen," was in the air. The Roman colossus was tottering on its feet of clay. From the farthest confines of the Empire came word of a sympathetic attitude towards the Jewish rebels who had dared the impossible.

It is not definitely known where the Emperor Hadrian was sojourning at the time the Judean revolt broke out. He was probably in Greece. But it is known that he was beside himself with rage when word of the extent of the upheaval reached him. Counselors and grammarians in his entourage, with whom he had set out on a tour of inspection of the monuments of antiquity, were seized by panic. Hadrian realized that only the severest measures could squelch the uproar that filled the East.

Large bodies of troops were set in motion. From Egypt, from Spain and Gaul, even from distant Britain at the end of the known world, the legions began to march in the direction of Palestine. The ablest generals were commissioned for the war. Julius Severus, one of the most distinguished of Hadrian's strategists, was summoned from the most distant borders of the Empire and entrusted with the supreme command.

In the meantime Palestine, having been entirely cleared of the Roman enemy, was put in a state of defense. The real war was yet to start. That war, or rather that massacre, lasted for three and a half years. It seems that not a single open battle was fought. The rebels had to be cleared out of their lairs at the point of the sword. In this work the Roman troops proceeded with the utmost savagery. No prisoners were taken, or if they were taken, it was only to be crucified.

Of Bar Kochba's personal courage, the most fantastic

accounts were current. He was a man of extraordinary physical size, nearly eight feet in height, with arms of iron and legs like pillars of granite. He was said to have caught in his bare hands the huge boulders which the Roman catapults hurled into the Jewish ranks. He placed burning tow in his mouth and advanced upon the legions as if he were a walking mountain spitting fire. He performed wonders every day. Stories of unbelievable heroism on the part of the Jewish fighters have also come down to us. But in the end, as was to be foreseen, the Jewish nation was crushed beyond the power to rise again.

In the course of this rebellion, at the time when Bar Kochba was mobilizing his forces and summoning to his side all Jews capable of bearing arms, something occurred which is of the utmost importance in the study of the origins of Christianity, and which has, hitherto, been curiously neglected by scholars looking for evidence of the historic existence of the man known as Jesus of Nazareth.

When the banner of revolt was raised against Hadrian, and the Jews in their first impetuous onrush succeeded in expelling the Roman garrisons from the Holy Land, Rabbi Akiba designated Bar Kochba as the messiah.

Akiba was the most celebrated doctor of the Sacred Law of his time. He headed the most important school at Yabneh. Not all of Akiba's rabbinical colleagues joined him in his proclamation of Bar Kochba's messianic status, but the mass of the people believed wholeheartedly.

A widespread sentiment was current that the day had come when an old prophecy would be fulfilled, and that Israel would at last cast off the yoke of the oppressors. Bar Kochba's startling initial successes greatly fortified the

impression that he was indeed the liberator promised and sent by God to deliver His people Israel.

The mass of the people accepted Bar Kochba as the messiah, but not the so-called Nazarenes who were the followers of Jesus. They argued that Bar Kochba could not be the messiah since their Master Jesus, crucified nearly a hundred years before, had been the redeemer sent by God!

If the rebellion was to be a movement of messianic character, the followers of Jesus could not bring themselves to take part in it. Indeed, they refused to fight. They refused to be drafted into the national army Bar Kochba was raising in anticipation of the Roman counterattack. In this decision the Nazarenes were not animated by pacifist motives. They simply could not deny their own messiah by recognizing the leader of the revolt as such. Had Bar Kochba been merely a war chief they could, and probably would, have joined his forces, for they were as ardently patriotic as the rest of their countrymen. In the year 70 their predecessors had not stood aside in the defense of Jerusalem. They could not follow Bar Kochba in 132, however, if, as Rabbi Akiba and the vast majority of the Jewish people maintained, the military leader was to be regarded as a messianic king, as God's anointed. In the eyes of these Nazarenes, that exalted status was reserved for Jesus alone.

The controversy waxed hot and furious and soon degenerated into a brawl. Bar Kochba took severe measures against the Nazarenes, not for religious reasons, or because of their devotion to Jesus' memory, but because their stand, in his estimation, was detrimental to the national cause when that cause swayed perilously in the balance. He looked upon them as obstructors of his mobilization plans, as draft dodgers and defeatists. The mass of the people con-

sidered the Nazarenes nothing less than traitors. The upshot was that the Nazarenes left—separated themselves from the synagogue.

All the sources, both Jewish and Christian, as well as certain Roman historians, are in agreement on this point. Two Nazarene exhorters, Quadratus and Aristides, addressed a petition to Hadrian imploring the imperial protection for themselves and for their fellow believers in Jesus, on the grounds that they had completely dissociated themselves from Bar Kochba's revolt, and that they had no longer anything in common with Judaism. For the first time, too, the Nazarenes placed an uncircumcised overseer or bishop, a man by the name of Mark, at the head of their new and independent congregations in Palestine.

"From this time," says the historian Graetz, "dates the amalgamation of most of the Judeo-Christian sects with the pagan Christians." He means that the Nazarenes ceased observing Jewish laws and customs to which they had up to that time adhered more or less faithfully. In their stead they adopted those forms of Christianity which had grown up in pagan, that is to say in Hellenist, circles outside the Holy Land.

The time was A.D. 132. Ninety-nine years had elapsed since the day which is commonly accepted as that on which Jesus of Nazareth at the age of thirty-three, expired on the cross of Golgotha.

Looking backward from Bar Kochba's revolt to the crucifixion, the separation of the Nazarenes from the Synagogue assumes a significance of the first order, and throws a new light on the most obscure epoch of Christianity, that of its origins and early growth.

For, if the Nazarenes set up their own religious corporation in Palestine only in the year 132, they must have been, and were indeed, regarded as adherents of the national religion of Judaism for nearly a full century. During that century they were not merely half-Jews, Noachites, or strangers in the gate, or mere fellow travelers of Judaism. They were full-fledged Jews, nationally and religiously loyal to the Torah, as scrupulous as others in their observance of national religious customs and folkways, and faithful in their attendance at the synagogue, and at the Temple so long as it existed. They shared the immortal hope of their people Israel, and twice a day, like all other Jews, recited that awesome confession of faith which has been on Jewish lips and in Jewish hearts throughout the ages, the *Schma Israel*: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

For a whole century, the first one hundred years of the present era, there was no more difference between Palestinian Jews and Palestinian Nazarenes than there is today between members of two different monastic orders in the Roman Catholic Church. To be sure, there were, as there are today, different schools of thought in the synagogue. But a man was not considered less of a Jew, nor was his fundamental loyalty to the nation and to the Sacred Law called into question merely because he shared the point of view of Hillel on certain religious questions as against the opinions of such other great teachers and sages as Shammai, Jochanan, Meir, or Judah the Prince. Pharisees were Jews, but so were Sadducees and Essenes and the followers of John the Baptist and the Zealots, as well as the Nazarenes who clung to the belief that Jesus had been the messiah and that he would come again to fill his role as national liberator.

These Nazarenes were not cut off from the community of Israel, nor expelled from the synagogue as heretics or nonconformists. They were in the synagogue by right, by their right as Jews loyal to the Torah, as sons of Abraham and children of Moses their teacher.

Jesus had never left the synagogue, nor had he preached or taught anything contrary to the Sacred Law. He certainly did not start, or intend to start, a new religious organization. The conception of a church, and the word *kuriakè* itself, the Greek equivalent of our word church, were unknown to Jesus. The very thought of separating himself from the household of Israel would have been repugnant as well as pointless, futile, inconceivable and alien to his Jewish mentality. He remained a Jew to the end.

Upon his death, the friends and followers of Jesus, as was but natural, continued to walk in his footsteps, which means that they did not stray very far from home—from Jewish customs and traditions. They followed their Master's example. They did not draw back their skirts ostentatiously to avoid contact with the main streams of national and religious life, as people sometimes do when they believe themselves the beneficiaries of a special revelation or the possessors of a superior truth.

The main stream of Jewish life flowed in the Temple of Jerusalem, and after its destruction, in the local synagogues. Jerusalem had been the scene of the Lord's death. It was there the Nazarenes expected him to return.

There was in fact no reason in the world for the followers of Jesus to detach themselves from Jewish institutional life, nor was there, it should not be overlooked, anywhere else to go. If the Nazarenes preferred to spend their time in waiting and praying for the fulfillment of their Master's promise that he would return to them, it was en-

tirely their own business. The expectation might appear illusory and foolish to others, but so long as no harm resulted from these apocalyptic speculations, why should anyone have interfered?

Nobody seems to have objected to these Nazarenes taking their turn in reading a portion of the Scriptures and expounding it on the Sabbath day if they had the ability and the inclination to do so. Jesus had done it frequently himself.

The Nazarenes or followers of Jesus formed a conventicle, a kind of prayer-group or study-group, an intimate fellowship of believers within the synagogue. One cannot, with the best will in the world, attribute to them, or rather to their association, a status of significance on a par with those renowned schools of thought where men like Hillel or Shammai held forth. The Nazarenes had no scholars amongst them. They belonged for the most part to "the poor in Israel," Jesus' special friends; humble and simple folk, untutored, unsophisticated, yet intensely, even fanatically, pious—although not necessarily unintelligent and stupid like the so-called *amè-haaretz*, who were ill-bred, backward country yokels.

What chiefly occupied the minds of the Nazarenes were the peculiar, somewhat mysterious circumstances attending the death and burial of their beloved Master. Inasmuch as they wanted others to share the consolation and the hope which they themselves derived from Peter's version that Jesus had risen from the grave, they were, we may be sure, constantly insisting on the veracity of that extraordinary report.

They sincerely believed that Jesus had risen from the dead and that, after showing himself to Peter and perhaps to a few of his other intimates, he had been wafted to

heaven on a cloud. Thence, according to what they took to be a definite promise on his part, he would return before very long, in a few decades at the most, and do what he had failed to accomplish in his lifetime: fully prove himself the messiah-king, restore Israel, cleanse the world of evil, and usher in the miracle of a golden age.

If the Nazarene followers of Jesus remained national Jews and members of the Synagogue for a whole century after Jesus' death, it stands to reason that their particular religious views could not have differed so radically from those of the dominant schools of thought in Judaism as to give public offense. Whatever the Nazarenes thought and said of Jesus was not considered serious enough to cause them to be regarded as schismatics or to be treated as apostates from Judaism. They constituted an inconsiderable minority of humble and poor people without power or influence. They were looked upon with pity rather than with scorn.

No doubt certain socially conservative, prominent people assumed towards them something of that condescending aloofness which is not uncommon even in our day in the attitude of prelates and dignitaries of established churches towards the fanatical and plebeian adherents of such revolutionary sects as Jehovah's Witnesses.

We know from St. Paul that the speaking with many tongues in which the Nazarenes frequently indulged in their conventicles, as the Holy Rollers do in our day, was generally taken as a sign of stark madness. People might shrug their shoulders and smile at the Nazarenes' creed and private religious practices. But there was no more trouble than an occasional dispute or altercation between the

Jewish followers of Jesus and other Jews. On the whole the Nazarenes went their way undisturbed and unmolested.

It almost goes without saying that on their part the Nazarenes did not hold the leaders of their people, the chief priests and elders, responsible for the death of Jesus. They knew full well who had executed him and why he had been done to death. They knew that if, instead of appearing before Pontius Pilate, Jesus had been tried by the Sanhedrin, or the Bet Din or by any other Jewish court of law, he would have received the same scrupulously just and tolerant treatment they now received from the majority.

The identity of the executioners of Jesus was not, for a hundred years and more, the subject of contention or debate or division amongst Palestinian Jews whether Nazarenes, Pharisees or what not. The Jewish people had not had the least reason to put Jesus to death. But the Romans had. The Romans were aware of the fact that Jesus wanted to see the *Imperium Romanum* replaced by the theocracy of Yahveh.

There may have been, there almost certainly were, some who thought the elimination of Jesus of Nazareth by Pontius Pilate to have been a wise and statesmanlike act, in that it removed from the scene a messianic troublemaker and seditionist who caused commotion and unrest among the unlettered common people and thus constituted a threat to social peace and to correct relations with the Romans. But such a view was not openly expressed. Nor was it shared by the mass of the people, nor by the compassionate Pharisees who regarded the execution of any son of Israel as a calamity and a blot on the holy name of Jerusalem.

Like the Pharisees, and also the ascetic groups of Essenes who lived in primitive communist colonies on the

rim of the Judean desert and in Transjordan, the Nazarene followers of Jesus fulfilled, as far as ordinary people could fulfill, the exacting prescriptions of the Mosaic Law. They kept the Sabbath like everybody else. They were particularly assiduous in frequenting the meetings for reading, prayer and discussion in the houses of instruction, as the synagogues were called. Above all, like all other Jews, but with an exceptional fervor, the Nazarenes believed in the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Where they differed from their fellow Jews was in the interpretation they placed on the time and manner in which that generally longed-for divine dispensation was to come about. To the Nazarenes their Master Jesus had not been merely a herald, an announcer of the Kingdom's advent, as John the Baptist and the great Prophets of the past had been. They believed that Jesus had actually instituted the new dispensation. With him they had entered the new era. The full manifestation of its glory, they believed, was only a matter of time.

Before his death Jesus had made a promise that he would not desert or disappoint his followers and that, in spite of all obstacles placed in his way, even if death intervened, he would carry through the mission, entrusted to him by God, of changing the shape of things in Palestine and in the world. The Nazarenes believed that Jesus would keep his word and that he would yet triumph.

In their circles the beloved Master's death came gradually to be seen in a new light. His crucifixion was not, as first thought, the catastrophic end of his messianic career and his messianic dream. The more they thought of Jesus' death, and they thought of scarcely anything else, the more they came to regard it as a token of surpassing significance.

His death was no longer a lamentable, sorrowful occur-

rence that had blasted their hopes forever. It was seen as the beginning of fulfillment. Their confidence in the Master, so cruelly shattered in Gethsemane and on Golgotha, was slowly returning and reaffirming itself.

The messiah's death, far from dulling their vision of the future, began to sharpen it and enlarge it and endow it with new and broader assumptions and new assurances. The Kingdom of God was not a forlorn hope, not an idle dream, or an unattainable mirage. The Kingdom was even now trembling on the portals of time. It was about to emerge and to become a concrete reality. With this thought uppermost in their minds, the Nazarenes lived in a state of high exaltation and expectation. Ridicule or skepticism toward their ideal did not discourage them in the least. Vindication, they anticipated, would soon be apparent to the whole world.

The fact that Jesus had been seen after his death by Peter, once the Lord's most intimate companion, the trusted confidant of the Master's views and secret plans, was proof that he was still mindful of his own, and that he was still working towards realization of his people Israel's immortal hope.

Jesus lived. He was not dead. He lived with the Father in heaven, but his spirit was ever present in the midst of his friends. He encouraged them. He urged them not to lose hope. He carried them on his hands, as it were. Some super-sensitive souls amongst the Nazarenes, who had eyes to see and hearts to feel such things, declared they felt the Master as near as if he had been physically present. His spirit filled their minds. He was the content of their hearts.

To the Nazarenes Jesus was more powerful in death than he had been in his lifetime, for he existed in the spiritual realm which influences and conditions, for weal or woe,

events and persons in the material, earthly sphere. The Nazarenes grew aware that they had not understood the significance of his mission. Slowly they came to realize that Jesus had to die, and had to ascend to God, before he could pursue his task as liberator, messiah and redeemer.

Jesus had warned them of catastrophes and dire things to come. Weren't the Lord's predictions being fulfilled? What were the rebellion against the Romans which Titus repressed so savagely, and the destruction of God's house in the year 70, but fulfillment of prophecy? Wasn't the whole world straining and groaning under the Roman yoke? Didn't visitors from other countries speak constantly of social upheavals and warfare and terror and bitter misery among the peoples of the earth? Hadn't Jesus been right? Hadn't he foreseen it all?

The Nazarenes recalled certain words spoken by the Master in his lifetime. What had been a mystery then, now became a revelation. The disciples gasped in amazement and regret because they had not understood Jesus when he said once that some standing nearby would not taste of death until they had seen the Kingdom of God established. How could they have been so blind and so deaf? He had said he would return, for he alone could establish that Kingdom.

Maran atha! Come Lord, come back speedily! These words became their constant prayer.

If, as the objective historical record indicates, the separation between Judaism and Christianity did not take place until a full century after Jesus' death, and peace and mutual tolerance in the synagogue were maintained for all that length of time, how account for the New Testament's allegations to the contrary? How is it that the gospels and

the Acts of the Apostles abound in denunciations of the Jewish national character; that the Jews are called a perverse race, Satan's brood, liars, hypocrites, slayers of their own prophets and sages? How is it that the saintliest and worthiest sons of Israel, the Pharisees, are covered with invective, called vipers and whited sepulchres, clean outside, but vile and full of dead men's bones within? Why are the Jews, and not Pontius Pilate and the Roman legionaries, execrated as deicides? Do not all these accusations and epithets flung against the Jewish people in the New Testament point to bitter dissension and controversy between Nazarene Jews and orthodox Jews in the Palestine of nineteen hundred years ago?

The answer is, in the first place—and this must be patent to the historian—that the gospels are not contemporary with events they purport to describe. Secondly, non-Jews and apostate Jews were the authors. Jews would not have slandered and blazed against their own people as the New Testament writers do. The gospels in our New Testament were composed at a much later date than is commonly accepted. They were written (in their final form) after Jews and Nazarenes had separated, *i.e.* after Bar Kochba's revolt, which occurred in the year 132 of the present era. They originated in milieus where knowledge of the Jewish way of life and of events which had transpired in Jesus' days was fragmentary and entirely based on hearsay, not on direct observation.

During the four centuries preceding the present era, many Jews, for one reason or another, had left their ancestral soil in Palestine. Wherever they settled they forgot neither their origin nor their religion. They formed com-

munities, elected a chief and magistrates of their own, and as soon as possible opened a meeting house or synagogue where they could join in prayer, for mutual edification and to hear the Sacred Law expounded. The city of Rome with its Jewish population of fifteen to twenty thousand counted several synagogues.

The Greek, Syrian and Egyptian rulers had accorded their Jews many privileges. The Romans wisely followed that excellent example. The Jews had a charter of rights which covered virtually the entire Roman Empire. This charter not only authorized their religion, it gave them an exceptional status. In the Roman cities the Jews formed a community apart.

But the peculiar ceremonial of the synagogue, regarded by the vulgar, says Guignebert, "as a temple without rites and the service of a god without images or a name, the practice of circumcision, the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law, coupled with vile calumnies charging the Jews with ritual murder and the secret worship of the head of a donkey, gave rise, in the course of time, to not a little hostility."

For a time, the Jews of the Dispersion remained very exclusive and at a distance from their non-Jewish neighbors. Their legal prescriptions prevented them from mixing with the Gentiles. They made no propaganda for their religion, although they did not entirely close their synagogues to strangers. Gentiles were permitted to assist at the services, but were required to remain standing before the open door. To those who asked for instruction in the Jewish faith it was readily given. The Jewish Scriptures had been translated into the Greek language at Alexandria by the so-called Septuaginta, the Seventy (translators) about two hundred

years before the beginning of our era, so that every educated man in the East could, if he so desired, read and study them. In this way every synagogue slowly acquired a number of sympathetic Gentile bystanders.

Some of these went all the way in identifying themselves with Judaism. They were initiated into Jewish life by undergoing the purification of baptism and accepting the painful rite of circumcision. They sent their ritual contribution, or *shekel*, to Jerusalem for the upkeep of the Temple, and thus became full-fledged sons of Israel.

Many others did not go quite that far, but contented themselves with attending the synagogue in a space set aside for Gentiles, and lived the Jewish life insofar as their social condition permitted. They were called God-fearers and were regarded by the Jews as "the righteous amongst the Gentiles" for whom, as for every observing Jew, was reserved a portion in the world to come. In his *Fontes Rerum Judaicarum*, Theodore Reinach claims that "the righteous amongst the Gentiles" were particularly numerous in the great Jewries of the East and in Egypt. They were drawn chiefly from the upper classes in society and women predominated amongst them.

In the course of time, however, as was inevitable, these Jews of the Dispersion grew much less rigid in the observance of the customs and habits, religious and secular, of their ancestors. Their exclusivism waned. In two or three generations after their emigration from Palestine (we see how the process operates in America) these Jews of the Dispersion, apart from their religious convictions and practices, more and more resembled the Greeks amongst whom they dwelled in matters of dress, language, social deportment and intellectual influences. They became assim-

ilated. Greek letters and philosophy exercised an ineluctable fascination on them, and, in many places, replaced their study of Torah.

Ideas which were of capital importance for the Jews of Palestine gradually assumed a different significance to the Hellenized Jews in the Diaspora. Whereas in the Palestine oppressed by the Romans, the conception of the messiah assumed a militant, aggressive form aiming at revolt and national liberation, in the Dispersion it became a purely spiritual idea envisaging the conversion of the human race to the service of the truth.

Something of the practices and beliefs of the pagans slipped into the religion of those Hellenist Jews living outside Palestine. We know that some Jewish emigrants spread throughout Perea and Transjordanian rejected the divine character of the Law of Moses. Others, as in Idumea, declared the Temple superfluous for the worship of God.

According to Reinach the Jews of Phrygia, where the city of Tarsus was located and where the man known as St. Paul lived, mixed their beliefs with those of the native Greeks to the extent of identifying the name of the Phrygian deity Zebasios with that of Yahveh Zabaoth, the Lord of Hosts, one of the appellations of the God of the Jews which occurs frequently in the Psalms and in the epic literature of the Old Testament. Many assimilated Jews in Phrygia shared with the Greeks of that province a belief in the intercession of a divine savior or *Soter* who, through his merits and expiatory death, assures man of salvation, redemption and a blessed existence in the hereafter.

Hellenist and Jewish combinations of that sort appeared in Egypt and Syria and, in fact, wherever Jews lived in the Dispersion. But they also made their appearance in

the Holy Land itself. In that country, however, Hellenist accretions to the Jewish religion had far from smooth sailing.

The death of St. Stephen, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and the arrest of St. Paul in Jerusalem, enlighten us on the reception accorded the half-Hellenist, half-Jewish religious notions in the Holy City, the center of Jewish orthodoxy.

While on a visit to Jerusalem, Paul was caught in the act of seeking to introduce an uncircumcised pagan into the Temple. Some guards who knew Paul and who recognized his companion for what he was, objected to the pagan's admission, and upbraided the Tarsiot for having disregarded the posted signs, forbidding heathens, on pain of death, to penetrate into the sacred precincts. They were probably angrier with Paul than with his companion, because the man from Tarsus, when it suited his convenience, had publicly laid claim to being a scrupulously observant Jew. He boasted of being "a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees, blameless in the observance of the Law."

That day when he tried to sneak a *goy* into the sanctuary he was certainly not blameless. To escape the justified wrath of the guards who had stopped him from desecrating the Temple, he suddenly remembered, not that he was a Pharisee, but that the natives of his birthplace, the city of Tarsus in Phrygia, were Roman citizens who could not be judged by an alien, in this instance a Jewish, court, to which the outraged bystanders were about to take him. He appealed to the soldiers of the Roman garrison stationed in the nearby Antonia Citadel. They rescued him.

Who was Paul and what was he doing in Jerusalem? He was a native of Tarsus and the product of a typically

Hellenist-Jewish environment. His family seems to have been of some prominence, inasmuch as he derived his status as a Roman citizen from his father, "upon whom it had been conferred as a special privilege."

The city of Tarsus boasted a Greek university at which, in Paul's day, there flourished several renowned philosophers, scholars and poets. Most likely Paul studied there. As the son of a Jewish family he also frequented the local synagogue, where, of course, the Scriptures were read and commented on in Greek. Judging by his later writings and reported discourses, Paul was more assiduous in his attendance at school than at the synagogue.

That Paul studied in Jerusalem at one of the celebrated rabbinical schools of the time, that of Gamaliel, seems improbable. Most of the historical critics reject the allegation, although Dr. Joseph Klausner of the Hebrew University, claims to have identified Paul as a student of Gamaliel who tortured his master with catch questions and ingenious traps.

In later life he showed himself permeated with Greek culture and stood forth as an outright enemy of the Jewish faith. He treated the Temple with contempt and animadverted vehemently against the Mosaic Law. He was not a half-Hellenist, half-Jew. Paul was an apostate from Judaism, and as such was ill-received in Jerusalem even by the Nazarenes headed by Peter. In spite of the obvious attempts to soften and eliminate them, traces of the bitter quarrel between Paul and the Nazarene followers of Jesus, especially with Peter, are found in the oldest records of the Christian Church, including the New Testament.

There were several Hellenist synagogues in Jerusalem to which non-Palestinian, Greek-speaking Jews repaired

while sojourning in the Holy City. We know from inscriptions that Jerusalem had Cilician, Alexandrian and Libyan synagogues, just as New York, to this day, has Romanian, Hungarian and Lithuanian synagogues where membership is based on so-called *Landsmannschaften*, that is, on the countries of origin.

In these communal centers in Jerusalem, which usually had an inn, hostelry or a refectory attached to them, visiting Jews from abroad mingled with the members of the local Greek-speaking Jewish community, which was made up largely of returned immigrants, traders, converted pagans, widows, students and the like. In ordinary times Jerusalem's Greek-speaking community was not very large, probably no more than two or three thousand souls. But on the great national holy days its number was easily ten times greater.

Followers of Jesus seem to have been particularly numerous in these Hellenist synagogues. The man known in the church calendar as St. Stephen, the proto- or first martyr, was one of them. He was a deacon in one of the Greek synagogues. On him Peter, the chief of the Nazarenes, had laid hands to ordain him for the work of ministering to Greek-speaking Jews. Stephen served as intermediary between the Nazarenes and the Greek Jews because the chiefs of the Nazarenes, who were the original companions of Jesus, and all Galileans, could not speak the Greek language.

Stephen was a particularly zealous propagandist. He went much further than the Nazarenes in their devotion to Jesus' memory. He had not known the Master personally, but he was steeped in Hellenist culture. He claimed for Jesus a status which the Nazarenes had never ventured to attribute to Jesus. He identified the Risen Lord with the to him (Stephen) familiar dying and rising god of Greek mythology.

Stephen was really the first Christian. He got into trouble in Jerusalem. It was not a matter of great consequence to the orthodox Jews whether Stephen spoke as he did in far-off Pamphilia or Phrygia, or wherever he hailed from, but it was serious business for him to deny the Oneness of God in Jerusalem. That Jesus had been a messiah, as the Nazarenes claimed, and that he had been seen after his death by Peter, was, by and large, a matter of indifference to the Jerusalemites. If the Nazarenes wanted to believe that, it was entirely their own business. Perhaps it was foolish, but it was not a crime.

But for a man to enter public places and claim divine attributes for the Galilean carpenter was an outrage to orthodox Jewish ears. When Stephen in his animadversions went still further and, in the spirit of the Idumean sectaries, spoke disparagingly of the Temple, he aroused the ire not only of the traditionalist Jews, *but of the Nazarenes as well.*

Still, to hear a man speak as Stephen did, was not entirely new in Jerusalem. All orthodox Jews believed, says Dr. Klausner, that the ceremonial law would be set aside in the days of the messiah. Stephen argued that the messiah had come, that the time of waiting was over. Jesus had been God's anointed. He had dwelt amongst men. The new dispensation, the messianic era, had been initiated by him. What then were the Jerusalemites waiting for instead of scrapping the whole antiquated and superfluous religious system?

Stephen challenged his hearers to acknowledge Jesus as the messiah. When he went on and attributed to Jesus a divine status, he transformed the national messianic hope into a doctrine of salvation. That sounded like blasphemy, for salvation can come only from God. No messiah, whether self-styled or designated, was ever regarded as a

divinity by Jews. When Stephen, moreover, spoke contemptuously of the Temple, he was summoned to explain himself before the Sanhedrin. Refusing to go, he was taken by force, and accused as a transgressor.

Before the seventy-one judges gathered in the Chamber of Hewn Rock, Stephen not only repeated his strictures against the Temple; he referred to Jesus as one approaching in status "the Ancient of Days." That came pretty close to saying that Jesus was God, or the equal of God, or sharing in God's attributes. Even so, his words did not quite constitute blasphemy in a legal sense, for, according to the Talmud, "the blasphemer is not guilty unless he pronounces the Name (of God) itself." This Stephen refrained from doing. He would, therefore, have gotten off with a warning, or perhaps been given the punishment of forty stripes less one, which near-blasphemers received, were it not that, upon leaving the hall, he fell into the hands of a mob of fanatical nationalists and monotheists. They would not listen to his protestations of innocence. They took him outside the wall. Stephen was stoned to death. He was the victim of mob rule and his execution, says Dr. Klausner, was not according to Jewish law.

Paul of Tarsus was present at the stoning. He did not participate in the actual killing of Stephen. He looked on approvingly and stood guard over the garments of the men who proceeded to execute the Hellenist messianist. Paul was in full sympathy with the execution of Stephen the deacon.

Yet Paul changed. From a persecutor of the deifiers of Jesus, he turned into the most ardent champion of the idea. He was a man of subtle and dialectical mind. Whether he actually saw the light on the road to Damascus and heard the voice of Jesus saying: "Why dost thou persecute me?"

is of course outside the realm of the verifiable. Undoubtedly he passed through a deep emotional crisis. In the course of time he came to share the point of view of his fellow Hellenist Jew, Stephen, the man whose execution he had witnessed.

But Paul did not preach his conception of Jesus' supernatural role and status in Jerusalem, although he did once show his agreement with the detractors of the Temple by trying to introduce an uncircumcised pagan into the sacred precincts. The attempt was nearly fatal to him. Had it been, had Paul been taken to court and sentenced under the law which he had defiantly broken, or if he had been lynched, as Stephen was by a mob, it is not unlikely that the world would never have heard of the Christian religion. On the other hand, it might have learned something more of Jesus, which would have been all to the good.

As we have seen, when the Temple guards seized Paul and were on the point of taking him into custody for an appearance before the Sanhedrin, he made an outcry and caused a commotion. He remembered what had befallen Stephen. His shouts brought some Roman soldiers to the scene from the nearby Antonia Citadel. To the centurion he explained that he was a Roman citizen. The soldiers took him out of the hands of the mobsters and set him free. He soon left Jerusalem, never to return.

For the Jewish authorities, having grown tired of the constantly recurring disputes and altercations concerning the status of Jesus, decided to close the Hellenist synagogues which were the hearth of that heresy. The Hellenist agitators were expelled.

But the Apostles remained in the City, that is to say *the Nazarenes, the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, did not leave, and were not asked to leave.*

This proves that the Nazarenes *did not think of Jesus in the manner the Hellenists did*, that they had not elevated him to divine status.

For a hundred years, after the death of Stephen and the expulsion of Paul, the Nazarenes lived in Jerusalem, sharing the weal and woe of the Jewish people. In all that time, until the final upheaval of the year 132, they observed the commandments, prayed in the Temple, and shunned contact with the uncircumcised heathen and with the heretical Hellenist Jews abroad. In that period there must have been frequent discussions concerning Jesus between orthodox Jews and Nazarene Jews, inasmuch as they belonged to common synagogues and were not estranged from each other in trade and commerce and in the ordinary ways of life. Yet, there is no mention of a single violent incident or bitter altercation.

That silence is the surest proof of the historicity of Jesus, as against the theories of the modern mythologues who deny that he ever existed in the flesh. In the polemics between Nazarene Jews and orthodox Jews, the latter could have said: "But this Jesus over whom you make so much ado—he never existed." This argument was never used.

The orthodox Jews said: "Your Jesus is not the messiah. We do not expect a messiah of that kind. Besides, your Jesus did not fulfill his promises. He failed in what he undertook." They did not say to the Nazarenes: "Jesus is only a myth that has grown up in your foolish dreams." That would have been an irresistible affirmation and would have cut short all further debate.

Of course, from veneration to divinization of Jesus, was but one step. No doubt, there was a great deal of speculation and discussion in the Nazarene conventicles on the

glorified status given Jesus in the Hellenist synagogues abroad. But for nearly a century, they did not take that step full and openly.

The expelled Hellenists became the first Christian missionaries. Paul of Tarsus was one of them. Upon leaving Jerusalem, these men went to Phoenicia, Cyprus, Egypt, Phrygia, Pamphilia, the Greek cities of Mesopotamia and other provinces of the Roman Empire, to Rome itself and wherever there were synagogues whose membership was made up of Jews, half-Jews, converts from paganism and proselytes, and where the strict observation of the Mosaic Law, under pressure of the non-Jewish environment, had fallen to a low level or completely into desuetude.

In Antioch, which was one of the principal cities of the Empire at the beginning of the Christian era, the missionaries preached "the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, first to the Jews and then also to the Greeks," as we know from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. In other words they preached a religion which had Jesus as the principal object of adoration.

What they preached was not the Gospel of Jesus of Nazareth. The Galilean's message had been: "Repent ye; and believe the good news that the Kingdom of God is at hand." What the missionaries proclaimed was something different. They announced salvation from sin through the merits, the death and resurrection of a god named Jesus.

—Christ is the title which such missionaries as Paul attached to the name of Jesus. The word means the Anointed One, that is to say the one anointed, predestined, sent by God for the redemption of the world from sin and from a state of darkness in spiritual matters. The Anointed was God Himself taking on human substance in order to reveal His love for mankind.

It is a magnificent and marvelously comforting idea. But it is a Greek idea and does not stem from the Jew Jesus who would have repudiated it as indignantly as did his intimate friends, the Nazarenes of Jerusalem and Galilee.

The nature and character of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus, in the wake of Israel's prophetic school, had announced as a revolutionary transformation of society, was slowly changed by the missionaries and the new believers, into a spiritual state of mind. They changed the hope of Jesus from an attainable, realizable goal to an abstraction. The Christians, as they were called for the first time in the city of Antioch, probably fifty years after Jesus' death, abandoned hope of the Lord's speedy return. Their Kingdom of God (for they retained the phrase), became the blessed community of the resuscitated with Christ to eternal life.

Unlike the Nazarenes in Jerusalem, who went on believing pathetically in the fulfillment of an alleged promise by Jesus that he would come back to finish his messianic task, the Hellenist Jews and half-Jews outside Palestine, under the teaching of Paul and his associates, projected the Lord's return into the distant future. Only at the end of time would the Christ return in heavenly glory and majesty to judge the quick and the dead. Then those who had died in the Lord, that is, those who had adhered to the new faith, would be raised by him to an everlasting life of bliss.

When a great expectation fails to materialize, its believers do not lose heart and suddenly write it off as an unrealizable utopia or an unattainable goal. They change

the nature and the content of the expectation, transfer it to another plane, or simply obscure its original interpretation, or falsify the historical context in which it was first set. We have seen this happen in our own day in . . . Soviet Russia.

The firm conviction of the early Bolsheviks that events of the year 1917 in Petrograd and Moscow were bound to be followed by a world-wide response in the form of a socialist revolution in the chief countries of Europe, was completely shattered by subsequent developments in the international situation. Instead of going to the left, the pendulum swung vigorously to the right.

Lenin had said that without a world revolution to follow, the Bolshevik upheaval would be an isolated historical phenomenon without great significance. But when the world revolution did not indeed materialize, Stalin created the myth of fulfillment. He claimed that Lenin's objectives had been attained and that "socialism in one country" was a possibility. He turned against Lenin's surviving associates and fellow believers in world revolution and treated them as damnable heretics and as enemies of the socialist doctrine, and ruthlessly exterminated them. ¹496

The growing Christian Church in Asia Minor was not more lenient with respect to those who did not accept its interpretation of Jesus' life, status and mission. The Emperor Julian, after Marcus Aurelius the most tolerant of the Caesars, remarked once that the way of the Christians with pagans and Jews, surpassed the wild beasts in savagery and cruelty. The Church turned with particular bitterness against the Jewish people whose recollections could have furnished evidence that Jesus in his lifetime was not endowed with any supernatural powers or divine qualities such as the Judeo-Hellenist-Christians belatedly claimed for him.

The Romans, with whom the Christian propagandists sought to curry favor, were fully relieved of guilt. The trial for sedition before Pilate was turned into a trial before the Sanhedrin for blasphemy and for transgression of the Jewish Sacred Law. Upon the Jewish high priest, the elders and the entire Jewish people were fastened the responsibility and guilt for the death of the Lord's Anointed. Pilate was made to hesitate in the gospel story and to declare that he found no guilt "in this man Jesus," whereupon "the Jews with a loud voice" were made to call out: "His blood be on us, and on our children!"

Jesus' blood *did* fall upon the Jews! "*Et comment!* And how!" exclaimed Charles Guignebert.

"And all because of a falsified text!"

Just as Stalin later vitiated and disemboweled the Leninist theory of the world revolution, so the early Christian Church denatured the original revolutionary significance of Jesus' word: "My Kingdom is not of this world." By pretending that the Lord had meant: keep yourselves entirely isolated from the temporal order, do not mix in social and political questions, but confine yourselves to an inner discipline, inasmuch as the Kingdom of God is a totally spiritual state, the growing Christian church took the bite and the tang out of Jesus' beliefs and directives. It made an abstraction of what was to Jesus a reality. The nascent Church transplanted the religion of life to the realm of death, to the other side of the grave.

The typical illustration of the Church's new interpretation is furnished in a story by the Church Father Eusebius. He gives a report of a questioning by the Emperor Domitian of two young Christians in the year 81. Eusebius specifies that the two Christians were Jews, of the authentic "race of Christ," Hellenist-Judeo-Christians most likely.

Domitian had them arrested in order that he might learn from their own mouths what they taught "about the reign of Christ." He desired particularly to learn something of "the nature of that Kingdom," to which Christian propagandists constantly referred in their discourses and writings.

The young men replied that the Kingdom of God, which Christ had come to institute, was "neither of this world nor of this earth, but purely heavenly and angelic, and that it would not be manifest till the end of time."

Hearing this, Eusebius remarks, the Emperor was overcome with amazement. With a shrug of his shoulders he smiled at his councilors who were present at the hearing. Then he dismissed the prisoners contemptuously and referred to them as harmless simpletons and dreamers. He ordered the persecution of the Christians stopped, for if the Christian Church aimed at nothing more realistic and substantial than the installation of a kingdom in the clouds, it represented no threat whatever to the authority and sway of the Roman Empire. That ideal kingdom of the Christians was as harmless and whimsical as the birds singing in Domitian's gardens.

But Jesus was crucified and went to his death precisely because of a vastly different interpretation of the meaning of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was dangerous to the established order.

The interpretation of the two young Christians mentioned by Eusebius was adopted by the Church Father Justin Martyr, the first of a long line of Christian apologists. He says: "We do not speak of a human kingdom but of a divine, celestial state."

While the new Christian Church prospered and went on its triumphal march in the countries of the Levant, gaining adherents by the thousands among the Hellenist

Jews and half-Jews, as well as the pagan Greeks and Macedonians, the handful of Nazarenes, the authentic followers of Jesus, remained in Jerusalem. They kept aloof from the missionaries and innovators abroad who were now boldly, even disdainfully setting aside old Jewish laws and traditions in their eagerness to make converts. From time to time a word of admonition and censure was addressed from the Nazarene conventicles in Jerusalem to Paul of Tarsus, to his associates and successors and other propagandists of his school. But no heed was paid by those calling themselves Christians. After a time, all contact was broken between them and the Nazarenes.

The Nazarenes still venerated their Master's memory, but they did not glorify him, or deify him as God's only son and the world's savior. They remained Jews, as Jesus remained a Jew to the end. But in Antioch, that great melting pot of the North where flourished a dozen religions, that glorious city with a circus, palaces and the priceless statues of Praxiteles and Phidias, the first Christian synagogue, or church, as it was now called, was founded. It had no links whatever with Judaism.

That church of Antioch became the center of Christian propaganda. It was there that Paul matured and where he and his associates and successors worked out their philosophy of the Christ-God. There, too, he wrote his catechisms and epistles to other Asiatic communities and churches.

Christianity had its starting point and set off on its world-conquering career in Antioch, not in Jerusalem. ✕

In Jerusalem, the Nazarenes waited for the Master's return. In the measure that they saw many of his predictions fulfilled, they believed the more ardently in his promises.

The world was shaken by convulsions and political earthquakes. One after the other, Roman emperors suc-

cumbed in dynastic revolts. The legions rebelled in Gaul. In the German forest, Varus had lost the cream of the Roman nobility in the ambush set by Herman. The Scythians struck a blow in Persia. The tribes in the Black Sea area demolished the barriers and frontier post which the Roman generals had established. The Britons rose. Vesuvius had erupted burying the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii under a crust of lava. . . . There were tidal waves on the Sicilian coast. Storms of a ferocity never before heard of in living man's memory, were reported from the lowlands near the North Sea. The weirdest superstitions were current in the great cities of the Empire. New religions, cults of unmentionable depravity and obscenity, made their appearance in the East. There were eclipses of the sun and the moon. Signs and portents of ominous significance were nightly seen in the heavens. . . .

The Nazarenes remembered Jesus' words: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars . . . but the end is not yet . . . for nation shall rise against nation . . . and there shall be famines, and pestilences . . . in divers places."

Was the destruction of Jerusalem and their national Temple by Titus the end? For a time the Nazarenes thought so. But worse was to come. Had not Jesus said that not until dread and terror would have reached their ultimate crescendo so that men at their wits' end, in death's anguish would call out: "hills cover us and mountains fall upon us!" that only then would appear the sign of the Kingdom of God? . . .

In the year 132, in the third generation after Jesus, when the Jewish people revolted for the last time against Rome, and when Bar Kochba was designated by Rabbi Akiba as the messiah-leader, the Nazarenes refused to acknowledge that title. They still clung to the belief that

Jesus would return and fill the role of his people's liberator. There were some disputes and some violence. Bar Kochba proceeded with vigor against those who refused to follow his leadership. Some Nazarenes were killed. Others had their houses burnt. That was the end.

The entire community of Nazarenes, about four thousand in number, decided to leave the Holy Land. They trekked into Transjordan and settled in a place called Pella. No more is known of them. In Pella the last friends and followers of Jesus of Nazareth vanish from the ken of history.

THE ETERNAL GOSPEL

Once the stars stormed through the heavens and the planets whirled through the ether, and the earth yearned as a bride for her lover. She was "wearying away" for the glow, for the brooding warmth, for the light of the sun. Her flanks palpitated with emotion and throbbed in anticipation. Then there were eruptions of fire, crashing thunder and roaring tidal waves.

But when the tempest subsided, behold, the earth's child was born; life was there.

And she fed it and brought it up, and it grew steadily stronger and fairer. The first life awakened and unfolded itself in lukewarm seas, in the slime of steaming jungles, in an almost formless plasma. The dividing line between earth and sky was virtually indistinguishable. Torrid moisture hung like a veil over the universe.

Then the mother grew severe and there were high winds of an unimaginable velocity. And then there were stillness and pain and hunger and struggle. But this had to be, for it was the cosmic law working in the chaos. Through the operation of that law came movement,

growth, development. Life hankered for fulfillment, for revelation, for beauty, for goodness.

Violent tempests raged. Hotter and fiercer grew the struggle. The earth heaved and staggered and moaned in titanic travail, as mountains were torn apart, as continents split asunder, as oceans boiled over, as flames, a thousand miles high, leaped into the air. In twisting and coiling and writhing and contorting, life ripened.

When the storm was over, animals and plants were on the earth.

And then, amongst the anthropoids there was one who moved more slowly than the others. He advanced with difficulty. Like the others, he walked on all fours. But ever so often he threw his body upwards with his front feet. For a moment he stood leaning against a tree for support. His head still shook unsteadily like that of an infant which is held up by its mother. His spine could not support the weight of the head in an upright position. The tremor of tense muscles shook his limbs. He soon tired, his head drooped, he fell back on all fours. But the next instant he was up again. He heard ominous sounds; the hiss of a snake from the cave nearby, a scream in the forest, the roar of a distant thunderclap. By standing up he could see better. He wanted to see what was going on. There was an urge in him to look the world in the face.

Five hundred thousand long years he was alternately up on his hind feet and dropping back on all fours. At last one of his young was born that no longer supported itself on its hands. Man was up for good!

Anthropus erectus! The greatest moment in the history of civilization: man walking erect and his eyes looking upward.

Thereafter, when he no longer needs his hands for

walking, he learns to sharpen a stone into a dagger. Another stone he fashions into an ax. Man is the builder, the developer. He hews down the wilderness, and his plow cuts through the loam. His brain begins to grow. He thinks. He is the thinker. He has imagination. He weaves fantasies of happiness and power. The *élan* is in his mind, the eternal restlessness, the living spark of the cosmos.

Man wants to create through his knowledge. But he is not always successful. He makes mistakes, all but fatal errors. Then his story is again struggle. Battles rage, mines explode, there is the tramp and the tumult of armed hosts. There is robbery of the poor. There are burning cities. The sick wait in dark holes for death to deliver them.

But man does not rest. In him is the divine restlessness, the Divine Idea, the *Creator Spiritus*, the Creative Spirit of the Book of Genesis, always creating. It drives him on and on through the wilderness, through darkness and tempests. He is in search of paradise. He is out to conquer chaos. He fights on through rivers of blood and hatred. And at last he sees the palm of victory in the distance. For man's will has become more conscious. He has discovered the laws that govern the universe. He knows at last the direction he must take. It is towards one world and one mankind. That is the road which leads to ultimate freedom.

It is the conviction of modern man that oneness, harmony, is the basis of the universe, that the cosmos realizes itself more and more in the chaos, that the social order, which is not yet, will grow in beauty and fairness until it will be a pantheon built of thought and knowledge, firmer than marble and granite, wherein the One, the Idea, will triumph over disorder and discord.

Cosmic is that vision of the world but also tragic; birth and death, frost and drought, fire and water always threaten the tender young flower, the new life, the growing

Idea. The road to paradise goes through hell and purgatory.

For now the cosmos which has built suns and corals, birds and plants, which has struggled through chaos for aeons, wants to create a human community. It approaches the final goal: the City of God. This is happening in our time. The Idea works on. It seeks to realize itself through humanity, through man.

And whoever feels deeply that Idea working in him, that man can say that in him is born the Divine Word, that in him is the Christ who was first a little child, weak and helpless, cradled in the manger of his heart.

But that Child will be persecuted and tempted. Its growth will be resisted by storm and frost and tidal wave and fire and by the wild beasts. The Child will have to struggle ceaselessly and bitterly.

When man, in whatever way, conceives of a purer consciousness of life and of his calling, when, driven by the Idea, he becomes a revolutionary who wants to create order out of chaos, to transvaluate all values and, like Jesus, "overcome the world," when he wants a real human community to take the place of the disorder of unbridled competition, of cut-throat egotism and mass-murder—when that happens, then, as in the case of the Jesus of the gospel story, his mother and his brothers do not understand him. They are deaf to his words. They deride him. They call him bereft of sense and "beside himself." He comes into conflict with the existing order, with "the world," which sees in him a danger to its existence. For the Pilates and Herods are not dead. They live and breathe and are full of menace.

And in the wilderness the Devil comes to tempt the Child. Satan wants man to worship him and cast out the Spirit, the Idea, the divine restlessness. In return the Devil offers earthly delights, tranquillity, respectability, honors,

wealth. If man sacrifices his convictions to his egotism he is honored. He receives promotion. He is respectable. He is listened to and looked up to as a solid and wise citizen. On his deathbed he has a gilt-edged ticket of admission to heaven pressed into his hands for having been so steadfast a support of the old order of chaos and murder and tears which the satisfied ones prefer to the Kingdom of God.

But if he does not fall at Satan's feet, if he resists the temptation, if the Child grows in him, then he, too, will do wonders and perform miracles. He will open the ears of the deaf, and open the eyes of the blind who do not see that there is no peace and collaboration, but only jungle ferocity. He will call the dead back to life. He will cast out evil spirits. At his word the Gadarene swine will plunge again into the abyss. He will feed the multitude with the bread of life, with the vision of the Idea that sustained and inspired the cosmos in its growth. . . .

He must go alone who has in him the luminous thought, the Idea of the growing cosmos, the sacred vision of the human community. For him there is no road but the road of the cross. And then those who seemed his friends, those who hailed him earlier with hosannas, his brothers and sisters, they will deny him and betray him. And the wound will be in his side, and his head will sink on his tired breast as he goes out into darkest night.

But the grave cannot hold the Spirit. The ideal is born anew. It rises from the dead. It awakens in the hearts of new men and new women. It grows in them. They carry it forward and they are carried forward by it to victory, to fulfillment. . . .

Even as in modern therapy the suggestion of health often makes healthy, so it is with that subconscious urge

and *élan*, that irresistible, nameless creative impulse which is implanted in the cosmic order and which has struggled ceaselessly through aeons and aeons of time toward a higher human ideal. First the sick man must have an idea, a suggestion of health. First the vision of the Golden Age must be seen as in a dream. That dream is Utopia. And the dreamers of that dream—they are the Utopians: Plato and his *Republic*; Campanella and More with their romances of the future and their model states; Erasmus and his *Sword of the Christian Soldier*; Jean Jacques Rousseau and his Social Contract; Danton and his Declaration of the Rights of Man; Jefferson and his Declaration of Independence; Kropotkin and his *Mutual Aid*; Immanuel Kant and his *Eternal Peace*; Gandhi and his program of non-violence; the Prophets of Israel and their cry, the land is mine and the gold is mine and the people are mine, saith the Lord; and the greatest of all, “the author and finisher of our faith,” Jesus of Galilee, with his announcement of the Kingdom of God on earth.

That was his Utopia, his immense and immortal dream, his ideal, his gospel, his glad and good tidings. This is his eternal charge: Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness!

Utopia is the imaginative reconstruction of the social order in harmony with noble purposes. Utopia is the mental reflection of a beautiful, perfect image. Utopia is a dream picture of the way things would be arranged and organized in a reasonable society. It is a “prophetic vision that assigns definite objectives to the collective effort.” Utopia is an illustration of what ought to be and of what, relatively speaking, already exists. For there *is* love in this world. There *exists* a sense of justice. There *is* a desire to render mutual aid. There *is* insight, and there *are* good intentions and pure thoughts. But these thoughts are not thought out. They are

not worked out and brought to fruition. The good intentions are not being made to apply to actually existing conditions and circumstances. The insight is shallow. It is soon blurred. The vicissitudes of life are allowed to overwhelm it and blot it out.

Evil will, no doubt, always exist and sorrows will remain, but today it is conceivable that evil will not always proceed from the thirst for gold and profits and power, and that sorrow will not forever issue from hunger and poverty and war. Today it is possible to think that the Power which has assembled electrons and atoms and molecules, the Supreme Intelligence which has built cells and which out of cells and with cells fashioned organisms that have brought man and man together—it is conceivable and possible today, to see what this Power has aimed at. All the time this Power had the intention of bringing about a more perfect human unity: this Power wills the Kingdom of God, it wants to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, through our thoughts and dreams, Utopian-fashion, to be sure, but also through the conjuncture of the existing historical circumstances, through the way the trend of the times shapes up at present: now: in this hour.

Never before has the purpose of the Creative Spirit been so clear. Never has it been so manifest that the Spirit which infuses order and law and sense and harmony into the universe, has a definite and glorious and marvelous intention with the human race. It has removed all obstacles to the unification of mankind. It has obliterated distances, swept away mountains, leaped across oceans. It has made the world one—one for all to see. It has made all men one flesh and blood. Now it asks, and very insistently, that men shall also live as one, live in harmony and unity of purpose, practice justice and walk humbly, live as brothers.

It asks them to begin *now* the new era of which the dreamers dreamed and for which the martyrs and saints of all the peoples died. It asks them to institute now the holy community of mankind and to translate into reality the vision and hope of Jesus and of the Prophets.

But then Utopia is no longer Utopia. It is the ideal. And the ideal exists to be translated into reality. Seek the Kingdom of God! Do not continually meditate upon and speculate about the nature of God or some other deep theological or philosophical question. Do not provide an escape in mysticism from the struggle of the Kingdom to assert itself. Seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness! Do not bore people to death with theorizing about some metaphysical problem or other, or make them think that they are performing a God-pleasing act when they worry their poor heads off in trying to understand and in trying to believe some totally incomprehensible and irrelevant doctrine. The young veteran who is secretly troubled about what is to become of his wife and children in a new depression and a new war—what good to him is the majesty of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity? What help is it to the Negro that Christ's blood is said to cleanse from all sin, when he must keep on clowning and crawling and degrading his human dignity by invoking and practicing all sorts of defense mechanisms in order to keep white Christian gentlemen from shedding his, the Negro's, blood? What consolation can the victims of anti-Semitism derive from the poignant announcement that God Himself will wipe away all tears at the end of time?

Seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness! Wipe away the tears now! Not God, but you do it! Not in heaven, but here and now, on this earth, in our time! If tears are to flow, let them flow in heaven. There have been

enough tears shed on this earth. Let them flow in heaven, those tears of which Jesus spoke, tears of sheer joy over men repenting the past and turning up a new road, by resolving henceforth to live as brothers in a universal community of peace and co-operation, in a social order that will reflect in its harmony the splendid harmony of the cosmic order. Seek the Kingdom of God! Stop *now* sanctioning mass murder and preparing for mass murder and a new crop of widows and orphans! Isn't it time to become human, to put behind all inhumanity, as a grown man puts childish things behind him?

The international cartels and monopolistic trusts and big business whose ideology dominates the thinking of this country in theology, in philosophy, in the sciences as well as in political action, have not learned the lesson of the last war, the lesson "of freedom-in-togetherness." They did not see then and do not, it seems, want to see today that the lesson of the war was precisely this: that emphasis was "transferred from private experience and individual aspirations, to the group, to the team, the community, the nation as a whole."

Today the cartels are in a desperate hurry to undo that experience of the war, to return to the *status quo ante bellum*, the state of affairs that prevailed before the outbreak of the war, to the state of affairs which by its planless anarchy on a world scale, has already produced two world wars. It will have nothing of the new "freedom-in-togetherness," of the group effort, of the nations operating collectively in the performance of planned deeds and actions in which all individuals not only have a material stake but also a share of responsibility. The lesson of the war was

that history, that God, that the Supreme Intelligence, sought to unify life in groups and in supra-national groups with the object of creating a real, visible and viable community of all nations and all peoples.

To return to the past, therefore, to return to the old system of unbridled competition, is to deliver a slap in the face of history and of the God of history. It is an anachronism. The past and the old order are "morally condemned and scientifically obsolete." For it will divide mankind once again into new cubicles and sections and put the nations inside new frontiers and *kraals*, all of them producing no matter what, no matter how and dumping the surplus across the border with the inevitable result of new rivalries, new tensions and new wars.

But the fault does not lie with big business alone. The Church, too, has a share in the guilt for the chaos of our time. The seat of the trouble of our time lies in the fact that the Church is at peace with "the world." The Church is not fighting "the world," not even resisting "the world." The Church speaks the language of "the world," collaborates with "the world," and acts in the spirit of "the world." The Church and "the world" are governed and run by interlocking directorates.

The process of the dechristianization of Western society was not set in motion, nor is it now furthered, as ecclesiastical authorities cheaply allege (in an effort to shift the blame from themselves and their churchly organizations), by the growth of socialist ideas, by secularism, by the spread of atheistic communism or Marx's economic theories. The root of the matter lies in the fact that since the beginning of the nineteenth century man has surrendered to the idea of power. Power has become his god.

Man's power, his domination over matter, is most

strikingly evident in the tremendous flight taken by industry. "The fantastic development of industry," said Professor Ellul of Bordeaux, at the Council in Amsterdam, "is marked by its absolute character. Today man recognizes not a single law, nor any restriction or caution or limitation in the utilization and exploitation of natural resources. Everything that can be transformed into economic values, be they of material, intellectual or moral or religious substance must be transformed as quickly as possible."

That this may lead to the exhaustion of our natural resources, as is obvious at present, to the impoverishment of the earth, to grave social troubles and even to catastrophes, to the crushing of minority opinion and to war, is not taken into account. Nothing matters but the increase of power. Any individual or social body, or school of thought, or sect, that calls for a halt, for a time for reflection, for a slowing up of the frantic drive for power, is unceremoniously pushed aside, or declared obsolete, or by intimidation and pressure forced into line.

Success alone is the criterion of all work. Instead of good and bad, just and unjust, the new values are efficiency and success. Everything is measured by success—even in the churches.

Today goodness is measured by the amount of success it contains. According to this formula, whatever attains its objective is just. Literally everything in the intellectual, moral, economic and political realm is made subject to the criterion of success. As a result, science sees its focus changed from research or explanation, to utility and adaptation. Justice no longer has the triumph of right as its exclusive objective, but the prompt execution of the commands of the state. The morality of success is enthroned

in our midst; the new ethics of success apply to all the manifestations of life.

How can the Church, in these circumstances, point to anti-Christianity as the foe, when that foe is firmly established in its own bosom? How can the Church, in these circumstances, still fulfill its task as the announcer, or as the foundation-layer of the Kingdom of God? To a success-drunken nation, the Kingdom of God is utter foolishness, contemptible dreamstuff. Self-sacrifice, abnegation, love of one's neighbor, do not lead to success. They lead to the cross, which the world identifies with defeat and annihilation.

"What did the common people expect from the Church?" asked a great German theologian toward the end of the last century. And the answer was "Everything!" "What did the common people receive from the Church?" And the answer was: "Nothing! Nothing, except the advice to bear their lot in patience in this vale of tears."

If the Church really saw and understood what is happening in the world today, it would act quite differently from the way it acts now. If it really possessed, as it claims to possess, the secret of the historical process in the person and divinity of Jesus Christ without whom, as it claims, there can be no genuine world order; if it had total faith, Christians would not stand today just as paralyzed, impotent and trembling as non-Christians in the presence of baffling social, national and international problems.

Things have come to such a pass that few people expect anything different or anything special from the Church when important decisions are to be made in the social sphere, nationally or in the world. Recently a professor of philosophy in Holland asked this question: "Why should the world want to take cognizance of the views and

opinions of the organized Church? You simply don't talk to something that is dead. You pass it by!"

By the side of the worship of power, stands today a new theology, which under a cloak of profundity hides an ugly reactionary political motive. This new theology, which enjoys a wide vogue in our Protestant churches, does not feel called upon to probe and illuminate the evils of a social order which makes for imperialism, war and colonial exploitation. Not society, but man in the abstract is the object of its disillusionment and wrath. Man is burdened with so colossal a load of sin and evil inclinations that all his relationships with his fellows and with God are poisoned thereby.

The new theology does not define evil and sin in terms of social oppression, but in terms of metaphysical abstraction. Its secret aim is to divorce religion from the social struggle. It seeks to prevent man from coming to grips with the reality. It purposely confuses him and sets him on a false track, or no track at all.

A genuine Christian theology, based on the concept of the emerging, growing and struggling Kingdom of God, would recognize that conflict is inherent in the reality, and that this conflict is neither meaningless, nor senseless, nor sinful, but historically conditioned: a conflict between growing and dying social forces and ideas.

Romain Rolland once said that the real tyranny of bourgeois society is a hidden tyranny. The new theology is part of that tyranny. It is one of the weapons taken up by a social class to fend off the specter of its own dissolution. Its constant insistence on man's corruption and sinfulness is calculated to instill in him a false humility, an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and impotency which acts as a brake and undermines man's confidence in his

capacity to execute those tasks which he must perform to free himself. The new theology is a subtle denial of the meaning of religion as spiritual and material renewal and regeneration—of man's decision to have a calling and destiny and to fulfill it.

Like the doctrines of Paul of Tarsus, the new theology preaches a religion for rich men. When it insinuates, in the words of Hezekiah, that ours is a "day . . . of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth," and that we must, therefore, expect "to live for decades and possibly for centuries in heartbreaking frustration," the new theology gives political justification and spiritual comfort to the social class which possesses wealth and well-being and which stands guard over its privileges like the proverbial dog in the manger.

The analogy with Hezekiah's time is absolutely false. Every man is called upon to perform the moral deed through which salvation comes. Man is the crown of God's creation, God's image and likeness. He is God's collaborator. Through his deeds man may compel God to redeem the world with him.

There is a will to give birth and there is strength to bring forth. But something like what happened in the concentration camps of the Reich is happening today in our world on an international scale. In one of those camps, the one at Auschwitz, there was a Nazi woman, a sort of superior officer, a grotesquely depraved human being who took a particular delight in being present in the maternity ward of the camp's hospital when Jewish women prisoners were about to be delivered and were suffering the first pangs of childbirth. That Nazi woman-officer would then order leather straps to be fastened around the heels, the

knees, the thighs and the hips of the pregnant woman, who thereupon could not bring forth the child ordained to be born and who, as well as the child, of course, died in the most horrible manner imaginable.

That is what is going on in the world. The old order and its secular and theological apologists and defenders are trying to turn the birth of the new order into a bloody abortion. They are trying today to head off the democratic revolution of the peoples of Europe and of the peoples living in the traditional colonial areas. That Europe where the new order wants to emerge, and where it must emerge because the old order there is stricken with a mortal paralysis, that Europe today is rapidly being caught in a grip as hideously effective as the leather straps that were fastened around the limbs of the pregnant women in Auschwitz Camp.

There is a new order being born today. And still it moves! said Galileo. And still it comes, even if, as Luther said, there are ten thousand devils in Worms to hold it back! God's Kingdom goes marching on!

But mark the centuries! How long did it take a previous "world," the feudal order, to die and be superseded by the parliamentary system? That was a process involving five or six hundred years. Feudalism did not disappear without violent shocks and upheavals and revolutions. How often didn't the cause of Jesus (which is the people's cause), how often didn't the new order seem to have suffered a permanent setback so that the religious reaction of the day could have sounded its cry of frustration: no power to bring forth?

One could name at least a dozen occasions, between

the days when the printing press was invented and the day when the Bastille fell, when all seemed lost and hope might well have been abandoned. The massacre of the Albigenses by Pope Innocent's crusaders seemed to have smothered in blood forever the freedom of the Christian man. But John Huss arose in Bohemia! Luther came: "Here stand I, I cannot otherwise!" The Counter Reformation unleashed the Thirty Years' War and two-thirds of the German people perished. Europe was a graveyard through which ran a river of blood. Protestantism was choked to death in Flanders. Unitarianism was exterminated in Poland and Moravia. But the Dutch Republic triumphed over the Empire of Spain and over the Inquisition. Gustav Adolph was victorious in Central Europe, Cromwell in England. The Pilgrims settled in America. Jefferson wrote the Declaration. The Jews were emancipated. Chattel slavery was abolished. "You thought we dared not make a revolution," cried Danton to the sovereigns and prelates of Europe, "but we threw you the head of a king!" The banners of the people did come marching through the thunderstorm. Feudalism collapsed. "And still it moves!" Great things are gestating in the womb of time!

The God of the Bible, the God of Moses and of the Prophets and of Jesus is the Living God, a God who lives and acts and intervenes in history. The Living God does not sanction the world and the world's ways. He has not elevated injustice and sin and war to the rank of elements of a divine order.

The Living God is the dynamite that breaks to pieces the theological decrees, that explodes the world's order. He tears apart the carefully constructed theologies of sluggishness and hopelessness. He does not attach His

approbation to injustice, destitution, suffering and death. He *does* condemn evil, but He also delivers from evil. He is the Living God entering into the depths of the world, breathing His breath of creation, of constant renewal, urging to deeds and deeds again. The Living God is a worker. He always seeks to build and to advance His Kingdom.

Do not say now: Oh, but that is Marxism, that is the "Stalin line" in disguise. That great champion of the Kingdom of God, Leonard Ragaz of Switzerland, asked me one day, "Do you know why Marx came? Marx came because Jesus was not allowed to come!"

If the Church does not now, in this momentous hour, dare to follow its Master, at the cost of a ceaseless expenditure of energy and sweat and blood and tears, yes, at the cost of the cross and new catacombs and persecutions, if it does not do its utmost to set the vision and ideal of the Kingdom of God on earth against the old order which breeds war and misery as naturally, as regularly as rain breeds toadstools in the forest, then others will do it; and those others, whatever their names or their labels, be they called unbelievers or anti-Christ or Satan's brood, it is they who will in effect constitute the *Militia Christi*, that is to say, the force that through its sense of justice and its love and its spirit of self-sacrifice will carry to fulfillment the enterprise that Jesus launched with his death on Calvary's hill!

Hark the rolling of the thunder!
Lo, the sun, and lo, thereunder
Riseth wrath and hope and wonder,
As the host comes marching on!

Yes, that host is on the march. But it is, alas, only a formless, vast, chaotic mass that little realizes its own enor-

mous strength and power. It wanders about aimlessly, as it were, and can easily, as we saw in the case of the German and the Italian peoples, be driven astray with false slogans into channels leading to its own destruction. For there is no fixed idea, no awareness, except a vague instinctive urge, as to the road and direction to be taken by mankind if it is to reach the shores of a better world, if it is to enter fully and resolutely upon the new era. And this is so because there is no idealism, because the leaders, social, political and spiritual alike, do not themselves feel, or because they refuse to feel, the ideal of a reborn, regenerated human society not only as an absolute essential but as an absolute command.

The ideal of which the Utopians dreamed and of which you can read in the prophecies of Isaiah and in the sayings of Jesus and in old Christian expectations, the ideal with which Maimonides and Erasmus and Campanella and Joachim of Floris and Saint-Simon and Proudhon and Bellamy and Henry George and Shelley and Carlyle and Emerson occupied themselves in one way or another—that ideal has been obscured by the ideologies which exalt and well-nigh deify matter-of-factness, practicality, efficiency, opportunism and materialism.

But there are some left, a saving remnant perhaps, who still believe with the Prophets and with Jesus in the ultimate triumph of justice in humanity; who believe in the possibility of making life on this earth more beautiful and worthwhile for all men. They believe in the immutability of the laws of nature. They believe in a universal harmony in diversity, that is, each nation and group working toward the sum total of civilization according to the dictates of its own conscience and character and genius and God-given talents. They believe in man's spiritual

growth, because they have seen it in man's rise from inarticulate apedom to the art of Rembrandt, the philosophy of Spinoza, the symphonies of Beethoven, the discoveries of Faraday and the theories of Einstein. Like Carlyle, they have never seen man rise from the dead. But they have seen man rise from nothing, from slime, from heavy-jawed, dull-eyed cave dwellers to such giants of the spirit as Amos and Jesus and Socrates and Francis of Assisi and Tolstoy and Lincoln and Channing and Freud and Albert Schweitzer and Karl Barth. They have seen that greatest of all wonders come to pass, men rising to the heights of human endeavor after emerging from an almost formless plasma. Therefore they believe in a future that will liberate man from all the chains and fetters of ignorance and superstition and fear and poverty and magic and disease and war. They believe in brotherhood; they believe in everything that may be conjoined under the word *divine*.

And these men believe and affirm that some day all these divine flowers will unfold and blossom on this earth in an era, in a state of affairs to which they do not always give a name and sometimes another name, but which some of them occasionally call the Kingdom of God, in the building of which they invite all men to collaborate freely and joyously: Jews and Christians, Catholics and Protestants, black and white and yellow, Russians, Germans, Japanese, Americans, Ethiopians, none being master and none being servant except of truth and justice.

Jesus said once that he had not come to bring peace, but the sword. That sword is his Gospel. That sword has been driven straight into our hearts. It has made a deep wound. But it is that wound, and not the prescribed repetition of this or that creed or verbal confession of faith,

which marks men who are sometimes called religious liberals, with the mark of God, with the divine seal.

There are some who would have us accept a balm for our wound, a sedative to set our disquietude at rest, provide an escape from the full social implications of Jesus' Gospel. They would have us accept some doctrinal narcotic or other, to lull to sleep our indignation and our outraged sense of justice.

But we cannot be silenced and we will not be appeased. We do not want the pain to cease so long as the wound exists. We want to remain conscious of our pain, of being marked by God. We want to remain conscious of our destiny as God's children and of our own moral shortcomings and our sin which make us unworthy of that destiny. We want to seek the Kingdom of God, not by staring at the mote in our brother's eye and disregarding the beam that is in our own, but by tearing up by the roots the injustices of our society and the egotism from our very entrails, because we are free and responsible men and women.

Those who believe in the Kingdom of God are those whose hearts and minds are filled with a firm purpose. Those who believe are those who would share the mind that was in Jesus, a mind of compassion for all the world's weary and heavy-laden, a mind of such love for children that it will save them from being sacrificed on the altars of a religious Caesarism or of a modern Moloch.

Those who believe are those who strive ceaselessly, because they have before their eyes, night and day, a sacred task, a high vision, a great love.

The Gospel of Jesus, we can see it now, in the light of modern science, in the light of events in the economic

and the political sphere, understood the meaning of the world and of historical evolution.

The Gospel invokes a terrible malediction on all situations, all persons and all powers which enslave men instead of setting them free, or which separate men instead of uniting them. Through the Gospel we know that humanity in its entirety is created for union and solidarity; because the Gospel considers it a duty of conscience and faith to triumph over everything that is inhuman or antihuman, or opposed to human solidarity.

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness," that is, try to regulate the common life on the basis of the demands of the most elementary humanity. First recognize man as your brother; first seek your brother. With that precept Jesus not only set up a social ideal but *the* social ideal of all time, for all races and all peoples. Nor is that ideal to be understood as an unrealizable dream, but as the real goal of humanity to which it comes ever nearer in the measure that its members unite in a serious sentiment of reciprocal responsibility, mutual aid, and a common will. . . .

The trouble with us is not that we are so bad, so evil; the trouble is that we no longer believe in salvation, spiritual salvation, social salvation, conversion, renewal of life, renewal of society, and if we have a little faith of that kind left, we always try to postpone translating our faith into reality, by saying: later, later, perhaps at another time, when it's more convenient. God's call is always today, today, now, now while there is yet time!

Why shouldn't the fire thrown into the world by the Prophets and by Jesus suddenly flare up? Why couldn't it flare up and set millions of hearts aglow, all America, all mankind? Christianity did it once! Communism is doing it

now. It is gathering tens of millions around its banners in Asia! With what? With an idea! Why shouldn't the vision of the Kingdom of God suddenly grow bright against the dark background of the pessimist, pagan, hopeless ideologies and theologies?

Hell is near, hell on earth, but God's Kingdom is also near. The Kingdom of God is at hand, said Jesus. The theologians say Jesus made a mistake. It is the theologians who made a mistake. The Kingdom was near in Jesus' days. It is near now. Very near. It is within reach!

This is the grandeur and tremendous significance of our time: there is a 50-50 chance that the world, wobbling as it were on the point of a needle, may fall either one way or the other, towards salvation or towards perdition. There is never a road leading downward without there being another road leading upward.

Why is there no peace in our time? What is holding up peace? Is it Germany? Is it the other fellow? Is it Russia? Or is it that there was a condition attached to the promise made by the angels in the legend of the Saviour's birth? Didn't the angels preface their announcement of peace on earth with the imperative: "Glory to God in the highest"? Isn't that what we have forgotten, and failed to heed? Haven't we paid respect and honor and glory to nearly everything else but to the Living God? Haven't we glorified churches, creeds, heroes, nationalism, machines, careers, fashions, possessions, prosperity, political parties, ecumenical movements, and success? Haven't we, and are we not now worshipping the false gods of power and might, making at best a little ceremonial bow or singing a conventional hymn to the Living God on Sunday morning?

To pray God to prevent a third World War, and at the same time actively and feverishly prepare to wage it,

amounts to reducing God to the rank of a flunkey of one particular economic system. That is worse than theoretical atheism. That is the acme of hypocrisy and godlessness. God cannot set aside His own law of cause and effect. Nor can He, by our prayers be turned into a sort of steel umbrella to ward off high explosive projectiles thrown with malice aforethought. Men who prepare for death must not expect life.

We know the inner voices the Prophets heard of old. They come to us insistently, articulately, and sometimes by their intense silence speaking louder than the roar of thunder. There is a still small voice saying that the old American ideals of liberty are being swallowed up by the lust for power and gain: if Russia is on the wrong road, we too are on the wrong road, in that we do not show the slightest inclination to conciliation, in that we advance no different arguments than they do. We, who should know better, we, who say that we know the difference between right and wrong, behave exactly as they who foolishly proclaim that they have extinguished the heavenly lights.

"Hear the Word of the Lord . . . Give ear to the Law of our God.

No matter how much you pray, I will not hear you . . .

Wash ye yourselves. Make you clean!

Put away the unrighteousness of your doings from before Mine eyes.

Cease to do evil,

Learn to do well,

Seek to do justice!

Relieve the oppressed!" (Isaiah 1)

First: repent ye. First: conversion. First: a fundamental change of mind and intentions. First: seek the Kingdom of God. First: Give unto God what is God's and then only to

Caesar what is Caesar's, and then only on the condition that Caesar also behaves as God's servant. First: glory to God in the highest. Then only: peace on earth! Then peace will come by itself. Then it cannot help coming. It must come.

If we are asked to glorify, to serve God before anything else, it doesn't mean that we are merely to pay a little lip service, or make a casual gesture of reverence now and then. Master, what is the Supreme Law? someone asked Jesus. Jesus answered by quoting from the Torah of Israel: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy mind and with *all* thy soul and with *all* thy strength.

And Rabbi Akiba, when he was martyred by the Romans, answered those who marveled at his capacity for suffering without making an outcry, that he had loved the Lord for a long time with all his soul and all his mind, but that now in death he was deemed worthy to show that he also loved the Lord with all his *strength*, with all his *life*.

The Lord is loved and served and his Kingdom is advanced by deeds and acts, by the concrete performance of His will.

We can only fight for what we firmly believe. Let us begin by believing that the world is not necessarily doomed, but that God so loved it and still loves it . . . that He does not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he should live and proclaim the glory of the Lord, turn from the sin of violence, from the original sin, the sin of Cain who slew his brother Abel, and make life into a temple of justice and reason. The first and foremost demand of the Kingdom of God for our time is that man shall have a reverence for life and that this shall be his guiding principle in his attempts to solve the problems confronting him.

The fate of the world lies in our hands individually and collectively. Whoever wants to be free—let him be-

come free now. Whoever wants to work for the advancement of God's Kingdom—let him become a brother now. The ideal blesses its servants even in the darkest hour. And even if justice is defeated a thousand times, it still remains justice. . . .

When these things begin to come to pass, cried Jesus, as he looked down the long strand of time with those eidetic eyes of his, and heard the sea and the waves roaring and saw men's hearts failing them for fear, when these things begin to come to pass. . . . Then what? Lift up your heads, yes, lift up your heads, not in pride but in hope, "for your redemption is near." The Kingdom of God is at hand. It stands before the door!

Open that door! Yes!

Author's Note to Supplementary Reading List

The writer of the fourth gospel concludes his treatise with these words: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

When one looks at the enormous output of works in the last century on the historicity and the personality of Jesus, even St. John's astonishing statement does not seem quite so naive and exaggerated as it first sounds. The publication alone of Renan's *Vie de Jésus* in 1866 was directly responsible for the appearance of no less than eleven hundred other "lives," not to speak of myriads of sermons, pamphlets and brochures, practically all of a polemical nature, seeking in one way or another to refute and otherwise discredit the contentions and conclusions of the great French exegete.

And still the stream goes on, although it no longer flows with the same swiftness and volume it attained in the days of Renan. Alternately it moves as if in a half-sleep, then suddenly like a cataract, as if a river had broken its dikes and swept its barriers away. In 1940 I had in my possession a library containing no less than seven thousand "lives" and critical studies of Jesus' deeds and utterances, all of recent origin, *i.e.* published within the last three quarters of a century. These volumes,

along with many others, were confiscated by the Nazis and shipped to Germany.

The principal reason why so many books on Jesus continue to be published seems to be that so little is definitely known of him. No final, authoritative and foolproof account of Jesus which would be universally acceptable, has yet appeared. Nor is such a work ever likely to appear, unless, of course, research should stumble upon something like a diary kept by one of the Lord's friends, or some other buried treasury of documents contemporary with Jesus. Until that time, men will, no doubt, continue to give us their interpretations of what they think Jesus was like.

For every work, whether composed by professional historians, scientists, theologians, or by dilettanti and novelists, is fundamentally a mere amplification of the role played by Jesus in the imagination of the authors. No really objective life of Jesus can be written. There are at present not sufficient historical data available. The story encountered in the New Testament itself is not an objective historical account, but consists largely of instruction and edification for the faithful. Only a few kernels of factual truth lie buried in that collection of pious commemorations, souvenirs, inspirational homilies and apologetics.

Novelists, of course, have by far the easier task in composing a "life" of Jesus. They do not know, and need not know, of any discipline to hold them in check. They may, with perfect immunity, allow their imaginations to run riot, and still escape the censure which a historian or a scientific speculator, with a thousandth part of their power of evocation and fancy, would incur. But then novels on Jesus are not scientific studies. Most of them are mere variations upon and elaborations and embellishments of the sacred text. Scientists, on the other hand, probing deeply into the times and circumstances in which Jesus existed, do not, as a rule, bring up much additional information concerning the Man of Nazareth. Many have been led to conclude by their studies that Jesus never existed.

Although I am aware of the distressing paucity of verifiable data on the life of Jesus, I think that Christianity is best

defined in Theodore Reinach's phrase as "a Greek mystery-religion grafted upon a Jewish historical fact." But I cannot believe that this "mystery-religion" would have had the development and the success it encountered if it had not had a definite and concrete starting point in Judaism. In other words, I am not convinced by the so-called *mythologues*, by the work of Arthur Drews, which makes of Jesus a personification of the sun-myth, nor by the famous Dutch school headed by G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, nor by the French school of P. Couchoud and E. Dujardin, who deny the historical existence of Jesus, and "prove" their point, at least to their own satisfaction.

I have no confidence in any of the systems, or schools of criticism, although I do agree with the so-called *Formengeschichtliche Schule* that the gospels are not historical documents, that they were not written and preserved for the purpose of making known the man Jesus who lived and taught in Galilee at the beginning of our era. They are religious documents which express the faith of their authors. The very nature of the gospels, their mode of composition, show them to have been written for utilization in the controversies that raged in the primitive Church, for catechistical purposes, for preaching, etc.

I have faith only in exegesis, in the patient labor again and again renewed, of putting the texts in their right places, and giving them their right sense, restoring the milieu in which lived the man whose traces we seek, in order that the milieu might explain the man and, in the end perhaps, bring him to light.

There is on this subject, if I may be so bold as to inject a personal note, a strange dualism in my nature: on the one hand a firm, tranquil and inflexible refusal to be moved in the matter of Jesus' existence by any argument of faith, on the other hand an instinct of the heart which trembles lest we lose him altogether.

In my youth I rebelled and participated in a demonstration against Alfred Loisy when he declared Jesus to have been a peasant of mediocre intelligence. I would have been better

pleased had M. Loisy denied the historical existence outright. Dr. R. W. Inge, the Dean of St. Paul's, expressed my sentiments at the time when he angrily exclaimed: "Never will we permit our Lord and Saviour to be degraded to that extent." But the Frenchman replied calmly: "the texts, alas, place and keep Jesus in that class of the 'poor of Israel.'"

In the course of time, I came to agree with my revered teacher Charles Guignebert, that man of vast erudition, singular piety and common sense, who held, after a long life of study that although Jesus passed through Galilee and Judea "*presqu' inaperçu*," almost unobserved, there is at the back, or rather at the bottom of the Christian movement, a person, a personality, who made a profound impression on the sentiments and the imagination of a handful of his Galilean contemporaries.

At the same time, I must admit that the affirmation of the non-existence of Jesus is not so flimsy or unsubstantial that it may be dismissed by a mere word of contempt, or by assuming a scandalized attitude. The investigations and studies of the *mythologues* are too serious for that, their conclusions too well-grounded. In other words, the quest goes on: should Jesus be ranged in the category of historical facts, or in the category of hypotheses and myths?

Even so, if it should some day be established that Jesus does not belong to history, my spiritual life would not be affected by it. As a Unitarian, that is, as one who stands by the Protestant principle of free research, I would bow my head, in regretful sadness, it is true, before such a scientific solution. The truth cannot harm our religious faith. It can only enrich it and ennoble it, although the search for the truth often goes along a road of sorrows. It is much easier, and much more profitable, to accept the dictates of one of the authoritarian creeds and, as a result, as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, lead a godly and tranquil life. To doubt has always been, and still is, dangerous business.

To this could testify a long row of Socinian, Labadist, Remonstrant and Quaker investigators who, on the subject of Jesus, sought to render to reason what is reason's; down from the Unitarian Michael Servetus who paid with his life on the

flaming woodpile of Geneva, to David Friedrich Strauss, who was hounded from every professorship in Germany until he died of a broken heart. Reimarus did not dare to publish his findings on the teachings of Jesus in his lifetime for fear of public condemnation. Renan was almost buried under an avalanche of invective of the vilest sort. The MacCaul Mission which sponsored Albert Schweitzer's first medical mission to Lambaréné forbade him to engage in any teaching or preaching to the natives of Africa. Independent investigators to this very day continue to be denounced as self-seeking sensationalists and even as atheists. But the truth is on the march, and nothing can prevail against it. In the end it is the truth alone that will make us free, and perhaps give us back the real Jesus.

I am convinced that Jesus lived, but from the day that the belief in the resurrection gained currency, his person has undergone a transformation which constantly removes him further away from the reality. The divine legend which was made necessary by the evolution of faith has magnified the Galilean teacher until he has become identical with God Himself. The evolution of that dogma has submerged and almost driven from sight the human being who once lived in Galilee. Of Jesus, the Man of Nazareth, little remains. The Church never showed an interest in him. It had interest only in the glorified Christ, the Saviour of the world, the Lord, the Second Person of the Trinity. That is, of course, its good right. But the right to seek to know something of the human being Jesus must also be conceded.

Some particles of the human Jesus may still be found in the gospels, although they have lost their sense there in that they have lost their place, and are subordinated to a scheme of things that was certainly not the Galilean's own.

There is no doubt that Dr. Guignebert is right with regard to Jesus' immediate hope: the installation of a messianic era in Israel. That hope was blasted by Pontius Pilate. But the Lord's greater hope remains and grows more vivid as time goes on. What if a prophet goes under, if he pays with his life for his ideal, so long as the fire of God is thrown into the world?

That fire, I believe, is the expectation of the Kingdom of

God on earth. That fire Jesus threw into our pagan world. It was his enthusiasm for that future dispensation of justice and peace which engendered Christianity. That fire, often banked and put out, goes on smoldering in our day. It will yet flare up into an all-consuming conflagration in the fullness of time.

In this book there is, of course, no pretense of writing a life of Jesus. I have merely sought to separate a few facts in the life of Jesus from the mass of myths and legends surrounding the Christ of the Church. I have written because theologians still continue to hide from the laity the fact that a serious search for the origins of the Christian religion is being carried on in the great schools of the West.

Because of the vast amount of sources of which this book may perhaps be called a distillation, no regular bibliography can be added. It would take up too much space. Instead, some books for supplementary reading and some notes have been added for the person who might feel inclined to verify or to go deeper and farther.

I have profited from many works of independent investigators of the last century in the hope of resurrecting if only a few factual circumstances concerning the real man who died in Jerusalem 2000 years ago, and who influences our way of life to the present day. The human being Jesus, in so far as we may still catch a fleeting glimpse of him in the sacred story, is, in my estimation, greater and more lovable than the magical and mythical Christ invented by the schoolmen. Jesus' message is eternal, and particularly pertinent in "a time of troubles" like our own.

Pierre van Paassen

Supplementary Reading

(E) English; (F) French; (Da) Danish; (Du)
Dutch; (G) German; (I) Italian; (La) Latin.

Chapter 1 *In the Beginning*

*The Apocryphal Books of the New
Testament* (Du)

H. BAKELS

*The Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphica
of the Old Testament* (E)

R. H. CHARLES

The Catholic Encyclopedia (E) 16 vols.

The Jewish Encyclopedia (E) 12 vols.

*Encyclopedia for Protestant Theology
and Church* (G) 22 vols.

Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels (E)
2 vols.

Dictionary of the Apostolic Church (E)
2 vols.

Dictionary of the Bible (E) 5 vols.

*Proceedings of the International Congress
of the History of Religion* (F)

The Greek New Testament

A Grammar of the Greek New Testament (E)

A. T. ROBERTSON

Greek-English Lexicon (E)

LIDDELL & SCOTT

Manual of Christian Archaeology (F)

H. LECLERCQ

Biblical Manual (F)

G. BRASSAC

*The Biblical Review, Dominican Fathers,
Jerusalem* (F) 40 vols.

<i>The Review of Biblical and Philosophical Literature</i> (F) 10 vols.	A. LOISY
<i>The Review of New Testament Science</i> (G) 25 vols.	
<i>The Theological Review</i> (Du) 36 vols.	
<i>The Review of Religious Philosophy</i> (F)	STRASBOURG UNIVERSITY
<i>The Theological Yearbook</i> (G) 10 vols.	
<i>The Religious Publications of the University of Tuebingen</i> (G) 25 vols.	
<i>The Critical Publications of the University of Montauban</i> (F) 25 vols.	
<i>The Religion of Judaism in New Testament Times</i> (G)	W. BOUSSET
<i>Primitive Christian Literature</i> (G)	A. HARNACK
<i>History of Dogma</i> (G) 10 vols.	A. HARNACK
<i>History of Dogma</i> (F)	JOSEPH TURMEL
<i>Social Questions in Primitive Christianity</i> (G)	E. LOYMEYER
<i>Religious Movements in Judaism in the Time of Jesus</i> (G)	M. FRIEDLAENDER
<i>A Social and Religious History of the Jews</i> (E) 3 vols.	SALO BARON
<i>The Religion of Jesus and Primitive Christianity</i> (G)	H. WEINEL
<i>Philo Judaeus</i> (F)	EDOUARD HERRIOT
<i>The Apostles</i> (F)	E. RENAN
<i>The Gospels</i> (F)	E. RENAN
<i>The Church</i> (F)	E. RENAN
<i>The Problem of Late Judaism</i> (G)	G. KITTEL
<i>The Beginnings of Christianity</i> (G)	P. WERNLE
<i>Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge</i> (E)	A COLLECTIVE WORK
<i>Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospel</i> (E)	I. ABRAHAMS
<i>Judeo-Christianity</i> (G)	G. HOENNICKE
<i>Jewish Religious Doctrines in the First Two Centuries</i> (F)	M. NICOLAS

<i>The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles</i> (F)	A. SABATIER
<i>The Hellenism of St. Paul</i> (F)	C. TOUSSAINT
<i>Jewish Religion in the Time of Christ</i> (F)	A. BERTHOLET
<i>The Essence of Christianity</i> (G)	A. HARNACK
<i>The Essence of Christianity</i> (G)	L. FEUERBACH
<i>The Origins of Christianity</i> (G)	K. KAUTSKY
<i>Jewish Eschatology from Ezra to Akiba</i> (G)	P. VOLZ
<i>The Origins of the New Testament</i> (F)	A. LOISY
<i>The Birth of Christianity</i> (F)	A. LOISY
<i>Epochs in the Life of Jesus</i> (E)	M. A. ROBERTSON
<i>The Consolation of Israel</i> (F)	A. LOISY
<i>The Problem of Jesus</i> (F)	C. GUIGNEBERT
<i>The Hidden Life of Jesus</i> (F)	C. GUIGNEBERT
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Chapter 3 *What Jesus Taught*

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NOTE 1, (p. 70): Although Alfred Loisy dismisses the so-called Sermon on the Mount as "a collection of Greek aphorisms" which, he avers, could never have been uttered by Jesus, other scholars have traced so many of the reported sayings of the Lord, including several of the Beatitudes, to earlier Jewish sources that I think it quite genuine, at least not contrary to the spirit of Judaism.

NOTE 2, (p. 83): When I call certain religious experiences "rather inane and innocuous," I have no intention of minimizing or denying their value. I respect the ecstatic visionary who believes he finds salvation in the blood of Christ, or who, under the suggestive power of the menace of hell, lands at the Salvation Army's mercy seat. I do not reject these and related phenomena, nor do I fear what is sometimes called "the exaggerated" in the expressions by word, deed or gesture of a human being shaken and seized by the divine. Whoever has understood anything at all of the passion of religious life, the profound misery, the godforsakenness of being unable to find God, and then "the joy

that passeth understanding" to feel oneself borne up by "the everlasting arms," will never be surprised that these things "reveal" themselves in a variety of ways. We whose religious experience is poor and whose feeling for God is weak, says Paul Tillich somewhere, should not judge those whose life was burned by the fire of the Divine presence and who are ardent to spread this fire all over the world.

Chapter 4 *Failure of a Mission*

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<i>History of Messianic Ideas</i> (F)	M. VERNES
<i>Messianic Speculations in Israel</i> (E)	ABBA HILLEL SILVER

NOTE 1, (p. 91): The figure of Judas Iscariot should be viewed with extreme suspicion. Guignebert says: "from whichever point we regard the betrayal by Judas, fear, jealousy, cupidity, loss of confidence (in Jesus), it remains inexplicable, futile, incomprehensible and without motive." Loisy argues that Judas is the personification of unbelieving Judaism. Why this personification? Legends do not like indefiniteness, im-precision. They must have a name and a person. What better name could be selected than that of Judas, meaning, the man of Judah, the Jew. The name Judas fits perfectly into the general scheme of the legend-writers of making the Jewish people, collectively and individually, and for all time, responsible for Jesus' death.

NOTE 2, (p. 92): Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven, respectively in Hebrew: *Malkut Shaddai* and *Malkut Shammain* are interchangeable terms which have the same meaning. Theologians have frequently made it appear that when Jesus used the term Kingdom of Heaven, he referred to a celestial state of bliss to follow life on this

earth. Jesus used the term Kingdom of Heaven because of his, and every pious Jew's reluctance to pronounce the name of God, Yahveh.

NOTE 3, (p. 94): In the gospel of John, Peter is made to say: "Thou hast the words of eternal life . . ." This is not a Jewish expression, and cannot have been uttered by an untutored fisherman from Galilee. Peter's reference was to: *olem ha ba*, to "the world to come," the messianic era which would usher in the theocracy of Yahveh. He felt that Jesus could lead the Jewish people in the direction of that Kingdom.

Chapter 5 The Arrest

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<i>Biblical Archaeology</i> (G)	RICHTER

NOTE 1, (p. 147): The fourth gospel would have it that the crucifixion took place on the eve of Passover, but the three synoptic gospels state that Jesus died on the first day of Passover. Both sources may be wrong, inasmuch as they do not give historical facts, but liturgical interpretations. Both are probably posterior inventions. John ties the death of Jesus to the sacrifice of the paschal lamb which the Jews ate on the eve of Passover. In the manner of the Greek mystery-religions, John makes Jesus a symbolical redeemer, an expiatory sacrifice. The Jews did not eat their paschal lamb for the remission of sin. But in the Greek mystery-religions the flesh of a divine victim was eaten to acquire the merits of the deity. The synoptic gospels, on the other hand, conceive of Jesus as a savior, says Zeitlin in *Who Crucified Jesus?*, "personifying the idea of salvation in the Passover festival." Whatever the date of Jesus' death, Passover or the eve of Passover, the Sanhedrin did not meet on Passover, nor did it meet on the eve of that greatest of national holy days.

Chapter 7 *What Happened to the Body of Jesus*

NOTE 1, (p. 198): Throughout the ages ecclesiastical censors have burned Jewish books or erased every Jewish reference to Jesus in them. Not only that; every reference by Jews to sacramental wine or to any ritualistic Jewish prac-

tice that might have a bearing on Christian dogma was carefully scratched out. That the Talmud, the Shulhan Aruch, the works of Maimonides and so many other Jewish writings have survived, is downright miraculous. They owe their survival largely to the tolerance of the Turkish Sultans. In the East, Jewish books were not censored and destroyed as they were in 'enlightened Europe.

Chapter 8 The First Hundred Years

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<i>From Jesus to Paul</i> (E)	J. KLAUSNER

NOTE: By a curious coincidence I saw the last-named important work many years before it was published. Stepping into an abandoned house in the village of Talpiot near Jerusalem in August 1929, I noticed the manuscript scattered on the floor of the library. I began sorting the scattered papers, but was interrupted by two British soldiers who drove me out at the point of the bayonet. On the orders of Mr. Keith Roach, governor of Jerusalem, who appeared on the scene, I was charged with looting. The house was that of the celebrated critic and historian Dr. Joseph Klausner. He was forced to rewrite the whole book since he could not find his manuscript when he returned to his study. Who got it? Surely not the Arab raiders who merely took the pots and pans from the kitchen and the feathers from the beds, and who started a fire with the heavier tomes on the floor in the parlor.

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